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"What is God's purpose for his people?" asks John Stott ... p.10

All that grass . . . p.12

61st year of publication

Turkey's elections: Islamist victory or road to moderation?

Turkey is more than religion and politics

Harry der Nederlanden

The Turkish elections on July 22 were closely watched by all those concerned about where the Islamic world is headed, but especially by the European Union. Turkey is on the waiting list for EU membership, but some members of the EU are getting cold feet.

In recent years Turkey has shown signs of swerving away from the secularist ideals of the founder of modern Turkey, Kemal Ataturk, who westernized the country by force. The party that has been in power for the last five years, P.M. Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party, instituted some mildly Islamic reforms, and even these have called forth huge demonstrations in urban centres by those who fear Turkey may be led down the Islamist road.

The huge demonstrations, however, did not represent the voters, as Erdogan's party won an even bigger majority than it had expected. With an 80 percent voter turnout, he garnered 47 percent of the vote, 12 percent more than in 2002. This did not, however, translate into more seats in parliament, but with a majority of 340 out of 550 seats, the government has a strong mandate.

The Prime Minister quickly tried to assuage the fears of his secularist opponents, telling them he respected the rights of the 53 percent of the population that did not vote for him and assuring them he has no intention of dismantling the present system. He also pledged to continue working toward membership in the EU.

In many papers the Turkish elections were still reported largely in terms of the Islamist-secularist polarity. But some pointed out other factors. Turkish voters, they suggested, may not so much have been voting for increased Islamisation as they were voting against a repressive secularist ideology sustained by the threat of military intervention. The army has designated itself as the guardian of Ataturk's secularism, and it has toppled no fewer than four elected governments that it deemed to be subverting that system.

Anti-hijab demonstrations

Under Turkey's strict secularism, for example, it is illegal for women to wear the hijab in public buildings. Erdogan's wife wears the hijab and so does the wife of the man he nominated to be president, Abdulah Gul. It was the prospect of having a hijab-wearing first lady in the presidential palace that brought out the demonstrators in force. Many of them were urban middle-class women who are afraid that eventually their present freedoms will be eroded. The leaders of the military let it be known that Erdogan was going too far, and he backed down from his nomination and called an election.

Erdogan and his party, however, have done more in the last five years to open the country to the West than most previous secularist governments. He has introduced many free-market reforms, inspired, of course, by the desire for EU membership. But he has also liberalized restrictive laws on property of minorities like Greeks, Armenians and Jews, as well as granting more cultural rights to the Kurds.

Ilter Turan, a political analyst at IstanbulBilgi University, said that Turkish voters were more interested in what Erdogan had achieved economically, and that most of them were not persuaded that he posed any serious threat to Turkey's secular political order.

Various newspapers picked up comments of randomly selected voters. Quite a number stated that they saw no threat to Turkish freedoms, for example, if women were permitted to wear the hijab in public buildings. On the contrary, they felt the present secularist ideology to be more restrictive than necessary and not very democratic.

See **Turkey** *on page 2*

In August most of the waterfalls along the Niagara escarpment have long ago fallen silent, and even the birds seem to miss the sound of water discoursing with rocks, but the rocks emerge from behind their liquid veils to reveal a deep, silent speech of their very own.

News

North Korea: refugees facing crackdown

LOS ANGELES (Compass Direct News) – Douglas Shin is a Korean-American pastor living in Los Angeles who has built "underground railroads" for North Korean refugees since 2000 as leader of the "Exodus 21" movement. Compass Direct News interviewed him by e-mail in Seoul, South Korea, where he discussed the communist country – run by reclusive dictator Kim Jong Il, whom North Koreans are taught to worship – that tops most religious persecution lists. The dictator is said to be the author of various atrocities, and under his regime refugees hunted down in China are often sent back to unspeakably harsh conditions in North Korean detention camps.

What is the best strategy for pressuring China to stop repatriating North Korean refugees?

Boycotting the Beijing Olympics.

What makes North Korea any worse a violator of religious rights, in comparison with, say, a country like Saudi Arabia?

The Saudis can come and go out of the country as they please, but North Koreans are all in captivity – a prisoner of Kim Jong Il. For that matter, the whole country is a gigantic gulag.

What are the most important items for prayer for North Korea?

The early demise of Kim Jong Il, whose health is obviously failing rapidly nowadays, and smooth transition of power to a less horrible tyrant or tyrants after that.

The Chinese government recently said there are about 50,000-70,000 North Koreans in China. Is it true that about 70 percent of them have accepted Christ?

70 percent is a fair estimate, but the number of refugees may be bigger.

It is said that about half of the North Korean refugees who have reached South Korea between 2000 and 2005 were Christians, but only 30 percent of them have maintained their Christian faith. Why?

It is true. It's basically the pervasive fault of the Korean church, which emphasizes outward-ness. They don't give true choice to people before they come to the Lord, but almost force them to do so, dangling some carrot before the eyes of these poor refugees. It's almost like, 'Accept the Christ, or risk not being helped (or being helped last instead of first).' That's worse than being 'saved' by a Buddhist who says nothing before throwing the rope to the drowning man. We need to learn to be more still before the Lord and let him do the work.

In general, how do South Koreans view U.S. policy toward North Korea?

The public generally has no particular view toward the U.S. policy for North Korea, because they don't care enough. Those in the minority who do care are evenly split between pro-U.S. and anti-U.S./pro-Kim Jong Il in almost every way.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban has taken Korean aid workers hostage and killed two of them – how could South Korean media and others blame the victims for wanting to do good?

The reasons are two-fold: Korean Christians, while numbering less than 3 percent of the population early in their history during the Japanese colonial period (1910-1945), were the spiritual – as well as physical – leaders of Korean society. With the outward growth since 1970s concurrently with the economic growth of the country, our faith has become very corrupt, emulating the secular sector, not vice versa. We have shown many bad examples to the people, so they've come to hate us now.

These Sammul Church folks are the cream of the crop of Korean believers, and Koreans have very little for which to blame them – except for that picture they took at the Seoul airport [in front of a sign warning of the dangers of traveling to Afghanistan], and the tourist bus they chartered in Kabul – yet, they are vulnerable to the avalanche of criticism from the Netizens and the media because of the general social ethos here that is willing to shoot down any Christian at any time for anything whatsoever.

What word do you have on the case of Son Jung Nam, awaiting execution for preaching Christ in North Korea?

His younger brother, Son Jung Hun, said in Seoul before he left for Washington, D.C. – and just now, too, by phone – that the last time he heard from North Korea was last spring, and that there's a strict blockade on any information leading to his brother's whereabouts now. But Pyongyang is aware of the CNN coverage and the U.S. Congressmen's letter to Kim Jong Il, et cetera, so I think he has not been and will not be executed.

I think Son Jung Nam is the Private Ryan of our day within Christendom. In 1998, he left North Korea for China and, in 1999, began studying with a South Korean pastor for about a year. He was ordained in China by the pastor who equipped him. After dedication, he carried Bibles and the gospel across the river into North Korea several times.

On January 20, 2000, he was arrested in China after another North Korean defector living in China, supported by the same South Korean pastor, had been arrested and told the Chinese authorities about him. At that time, the younger brother, having left North Korea in 1997, was also living in China at a nearby location. The 7-year-old daughter of Son Jung Nam, who was living with her dad, ran over barefoot to the South Korean pastor's place and told him of her father's arrest. (She now lives safely in China.)

In April 2000, Son Jung Nam was repatriated to North Korea with a record of working as a gospel/Bible runner attached to him. Due to that record, he had a tough time during his detention, and he also witnessed many fellow North Korean Christians who had received Jesus in China persecuted for their faith.

In April 2004, with the help of many relatives who were positioned at high places in the Workers' Party, Son was released and again, with the help of relatives, was placed at the North Korean Army's Rocket Research Institute with a de facto pledge not to defect again. But he defected again several times, before he was arrested in January 2006.

Has the number of refugees from North Korea increased in the past five years?

I don't have any field information, but from what I read and hear, I think the number of crossings has decreased because of the beefed up security by North Korean border patrol. But corruption in North Korea has worsened, so it's actually easier to get to China if you have the money. In China, crackdowns on North Korean refugees and on refugee workers have increased very much because of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. The Olympics may be a time of festivity for the Chinese economy, and the world that may be watching, but it definitely is a terrible menace to these people on the run.

The number of the entire North Korean refugee population in China may have actually grown because of the accumulation over the years. Many North Koreans have adapted to Chinese soil by now and are somewhat rooted their existence in China, albeit precariously. It's been over a decade now since Exodus 21 – the 21st century-version of the biblical Exodus – has begun.

Where are refugees arriving?

They come to Thailand, Mongolia, Laos, and Vietnam, then on to South Korea – all through China first, because China is the only country that North Korea shares a land border with. The North Korean refugee population in South Korea reached the 10,000 mark around last December, and it is increasing steadily by a rate of 2,000 per year. There are virtual North Korean refugee camps – though no government, neither the United States nor South Korea, nor any host country, will call it by that name, due to political sensitivity – in Mongolia and Thailand holding far more than 1,000 and 500 North Koreans respectively.

Are most refugees fleeing mainly famine/economic failure, or human/religious rights violations?

Mostly economic failure, but more and more are fleeing for freedom in general, including very seldom the freedom of faith.

Is relief work within North Korea getting more difficult?

I think it will get easier soon, because North Korea's leader,

See **North Korea** *on p. 5*

Turkey *continued from p.1*

A number of Turkish businessmen, however, were sure that Erdogan and his party are merely biding their time to turn Turkey on the road toward Islamism. "Turkey will never become another Iran," said one, but he did expect that under Erdogan it will gradually move further in that direction.

Suspicions

There is reason for such suspicion. Although they do not like the role of the army in Turkey, many analysts suspect that the threat of intervention is what is keeping Erdogan on the road of moderation. Earlier in his career as mayor of Istanbul, Erdogan was a strong supporter of the Islamist agenda, so there is reason to believe that agenda may still be on the back burner.

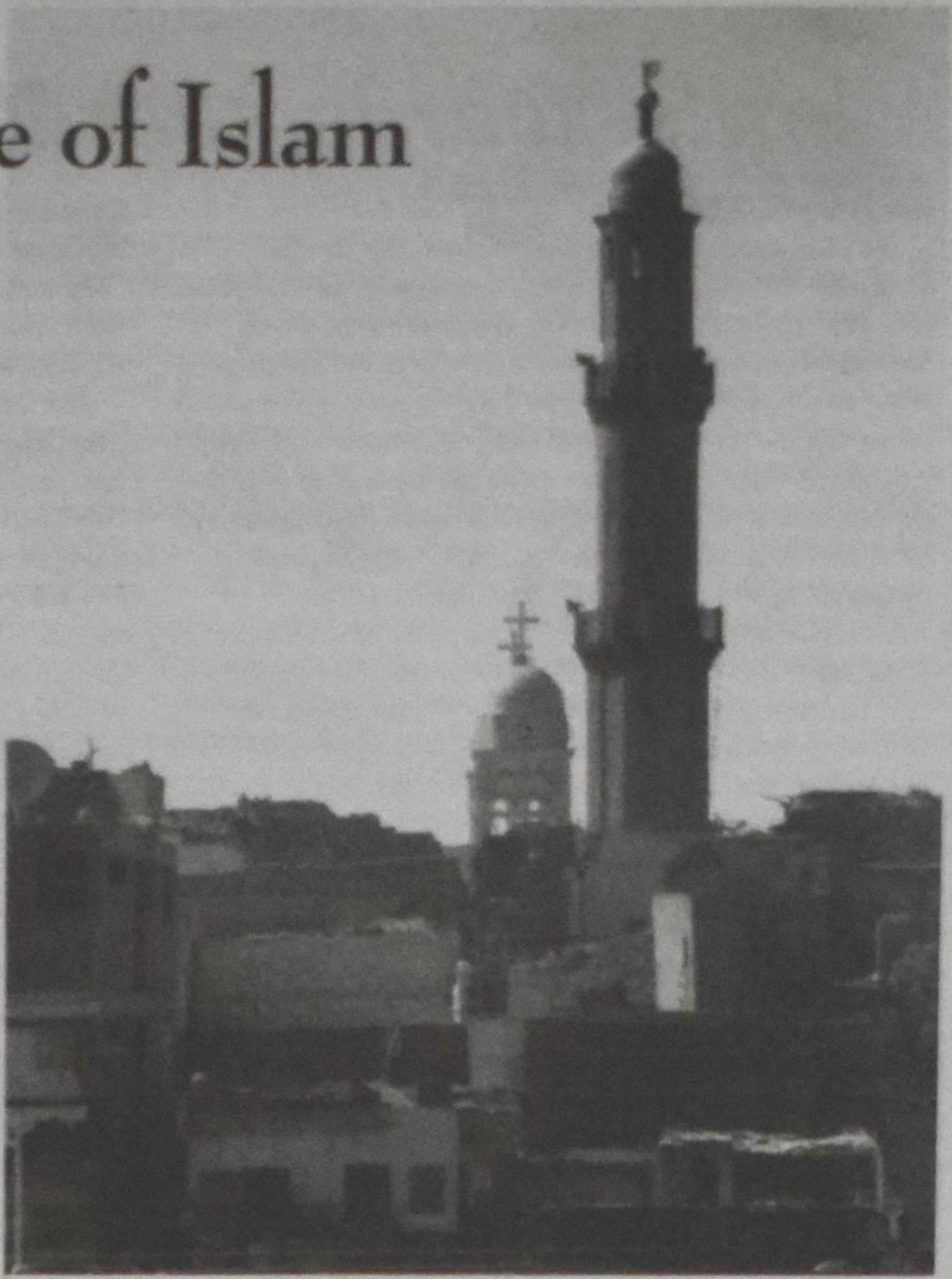
An article in *The Middle East Quarterly* points out: "He [Erdogan] has sought to reverse the ban on head scarves in state institutions, called for a 'change of mindset' in the judiciary, embraced Hamas, and endorsed an Al-Qaeda financier. He has sought to equate religious school education with that of secular schools, and his political party has worked to enforce Islamic alcohol bans in some municipalities. On April 12, 2006, President Ahmed Necdet Sezer warned, 'Religious fundamentalism has reached alarming proportions. Turkey's only guarantee against this threat is its secular order.'"

But others argue that none of this adds up to a strongly Islamist change of direction. They point out that recent prosperity has created a whole new class in Turkey, large numbers of which have come from the more conservative countryside to live in the cities. It is from this group that Erdogan draws most of his support, and they clearly do not always admire Western ways.

Yet, argue Erdogan's defenders, he and his Justice and Development Party are developing a moderate, democratic brand of politics that accommodates Islam while tolerating other lifestyles (within limits). One thing in support of the genuineness of Erdogan's moderation is the fact that he fired some 150 deputies from his party, many of whom were Islamists who voted against allowing US troops to pass through Turkey to invade Iraq.

There will probably always be a tension between Islam, no matter what sect, and Western notions of democracy and freedom. But Europeans will have to decide whether to trust and encourage Erdogan's way of accommodating to the West or whether to reject him on the basis of suspicions, well-founded though they may be. How else, though, is an Islamic country ever to evolve naturally toward a more open and tolerant society?

In Europe, skylines reflect the rise of Islam



Muslim minaret dwarfs coptic steeple

Isabelle de Pommereau

Wiesbaden, Germany – In the Rhine Valley city of Mannheim, the glittering minaret of Germany's biggest mosque overshadows what was once the region's most vibrant church, testifying to Muslims' new confidence as Christian churches are closing down.

Years ago, 180 sisters of the Catholic order of the Sisters of the Divine Savior were the pulse of the city. Today, eight remain. Every weekend, roughly 150 Roman Catholics attend mass at the Liebfrauen Church, while up to 3,000 Muslims throng the Yavuz-Sultan-Selim mosque. Since the mosque was opened in 1995, Muslim shops and youth centers have become a magnet for the Muslim community.

Mannheim is not unique. Across Europe, the Continent's fastest-growing religion is establishing its public presence after decades in basements and courtyards, changing not only the architectural look of cities, but also their social fabrics.

Hailed by many as a sign of Muslim integration, the phenomenon is also feared as evidence of a parallel Islamic world threatening Europe's Christian culture.

"Muslims have come out ... and have become visible," says Claus Leggewie, a political scientist at Germany's University of Giessen who wrote a study on the evolution of the mosque landscape in Germany. "By building expensive, representative mosques, they're sending a message: we want to take part in the symbolic landscape of Germany. We are here and we'll stay here."

Major mosque projects from Cologne, Germany, to Amsterdam to Seville, Spain, have met with fierce opposition and fears that they will serve as breeding grounds for terrorists. Family members of two of the suspects in the Glasgow, Scotland, car bombings this month said the men had been radicalized by Tablighi Jamaat, an Islamic revivalist group with plans for an 18-acre complex near London's 2012 Olympic stadium that would house Europe's largest mosque.

A local debate in Wiesbaden

Such a structure is a far cry from the dark, cramped basement that hosted Halif Kuzpinar's Friday prayers for 33 years after he left his native Turkey to work on Frankfurt's roads. Then, the Muslim group he belongs to bought a vacant supermarket in a residential neighborhood of Wiesbaden, a city in central Germany.

"There are parking spots. Children can come. There are better facilities for the youths," says Mr. Kuzpinar. "We want to build something nice so that people can come and see what we're doing."

With a place of its own, Milli Gorus – an Islamic Turkish rights group watched by the German government – is looking for something it never had: public recognition in a country its members consider theirs.

But it also ignited vehement protest. "This was to be sold as a supermarket, not as a mosque," says Wolfgang Kopp, who owns an apartment across the street. Along with other neighbors, he succeeded in, at least temporarily, stopping the parcel's rezoning for religious purposes. "Sooner or later there will be problems," he says.

Under the German Constitution, all religious groups can have prayer facilities. While Muslims have had prayer rooms, says Klaus Endter, an ecumenical specialist for the Protestant Church in Hessen, "the question is ... whether a courtyard is the right place to exercise a religion."

Guest workers worship more openly

Since coming to Germany, Muslim migrant workers like Mr. Kuzpinar have held prayer meetings in dark nooks that reflected the precarious situation of a people often torn between their adopted and their home countries.

But the "guest workers" who helped drive the economic boom of postwar Germany stayed. They set up organizations to run prayer, youth, and senior activities. They moved up the economic ladder, increasing their financial contributions to the groups, and receiving funds from pan-European Muslim organizations supporting the Muslim diaspora.

And now, the third generation is building domed mosques with minarets. Only a handful existed 10 years ago, but today 159 mosques dot Germany today, with 184 under construction, according to the Central Institute for Islamic Archives in Söst.

Aachen, for instance – a German city of 257,000 on the Belgian border with a 9 percent Muslim population – just gave the green light to a domed mosque with a minaret. That's a sign, says Mayor Jürgen Linden, "that Muslims have become a part and parcel of society."

But many see the arrival of mosques as a threat, with fears and conflicts worsening since 9/11, argues Mr. Leggewie, the mosque specialist. Grass-roots initiatives have sprouted that try to thwart mosque projects.

"I have the responsibility to protect our society, our democratic principles, ... our values," says Regina Ebenich, who leads an antimosque effort in Wiesbaden. Why, for instance, she asks, can't Muslim girls take part in swimming lessons or attend class field trips?

"A mosque is never a religious place only," says Willi Schwend, head of the antimosque National Association of Citizens' Initiatives. "A mosque is a caldron of political agitation. The goal of Islam is to spread the principles of Islam into society, to change society, to bring about sharia [Islamic law]."

Mr. Schwend's call finds an echo in eastern Berlin, where plans for a mosque with a 40-foot-high minaret have enraged a 6,500-inhabitant neighborhood. Although Berlin has numerous mosques, this would be the first in the former communist part of the country. There, argues Leggewie, the absence of a tradition of immigration, combined with strong right-wing feelings, explain why fears of Islam run deep.

A conflict of cultures

But even in Cologne, in the western part of the country, plans for what would become Germany's biggest mosque – with two 170-foot minarets slated to accommodate 2,000 people – has ignited a conflict of cultures.

With more than 100,000 Muslims living in Cologne, Germany's fourth-largest city, many religious and political leaders have rallied around the mosque plan. But Ralph Giordano, a prominent writer and Holocaust survivor, rekindled fears of a radical Islam threatening German society. "The integration of Muslims has failed," Giordano told the media.

Endter says Germany's mainstream population can no longer afford to ignore that it lives in a country of immigrants.

"You can't say, on the one hand, "We invite you to work, come over,' and on the other hand say, "Yes, you can pray, but only in courtyards, basements, in the shadow of society,'" he says. "We are in a phase of upheaval. The Muslim communities want to integrate. They don't want to live in the shadow anymore."

Mosque projects

Amsterdam: In May, the city council threatened to block construction of what would be the Netherlands' biggest mosque, which was on the verge of being built after a decade of struggle.

Cologne, Germany: The Turkish Islamic Union has plans for a mosque that would hold 2,000 worshipers. Roughly half of residents are opposed, and some worry it will overshadow the nearby Cologne Cathedral, a World Heritage Site and renowned religious landmark.

London: Plans for an 18-acre mosque complex near the 2012 Olympic stadium site call for a school, community center, and a mosque that – with space for 40,000 worshipers – would be the largest in Europe. The Islamic revivalist group behind it, Tablighi Jamaat, has been linked by some to those accused of terrorist activities. Family members of suspects in the recent Glasgow car-bombing attempt say the suspects were radicalized by the group. Tablighi Jamaat insists it is a peaceful organization.

Seville, Spain: Last month the city council announced that it would block plans to build a 65,000-square-foot mosque in the largely Moroccan neighborhood of Los Bermejales. This project, too, would be larger than any mosque in Europe today.

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Editorial

Words, words, words

Harry der Nederlanden

We use words in many, many ways. But in the Christian faith the word plays an especially central role. It is above all truth, revelation, light. Without words, we would not know where we are, where we are going, who we are, what creation and history mean or who God is. Words tell us about our beginning and our end, they give us an identity and they describe the sort of world we are in. It's no wonder, then, that from the beginning Christianity has insisted that the truth – telling and proclaiming it – is central to the Christian life.

The church, every church, has a body of teachings (dogma) that is handed on from generation to generation because part of the Christian life isn't just doing and following but knowing. To know God is vastly more than knowing a handful of doctrines, of course, but normally you can't have one without the other.

This awareness of the importance of correct biblical truth was greatly deepened during the time of the Reformation. Perhaps too much so. Seeing that the gospel of salvation had become so obscured by priestly tradition and ritual, leaders like Luther and Calvin made it a high priority to teach the 'unvarnished' biblical truth to the people. Both of them prepared catechisms or outlines of what it is needful for a Christian believer to know.

Nowadays we look back on some of that history and question whether it was necessary to try to refine our teachings on God's eternal decrees, predestination, and the order of salvation to the degree we did. It precipitated many quarrels and divisions. But hindsight is always easy. Our forefathers were only trying to keep intact in its full beauty and truth the doctrine of sola gratia. It is, after all, the ground of our faith and assurance.

But the word does not just tell us the system of truth, about creation, sin, God, Jesus Christ, salvation, justification, sanctification and the last things – all the topics that are covered in all our standard theologies. God acted in history and he revealed himself gradually in his interactions with his chosen people. To tell what happened, we have to tell stories, narratives. This has always been part of the Christian toolbox, of course, but in recent times many have thought storytelling vastly better than all that truth telling through doctrine. Still, people can get just as exercised about how the story hangs together. How are the two testaments related? Do we soft pedal the Old Testament? Is part of it more mythical than historical? How do we understand various "dispensations"? What about all that "left-behind" fireworks at the end of the story: how literally do we read all that stuff?

But certainly part of the function of the word for Christians is to tell and retell the big story of redemption. It is part of our memory; in fact it defines who we are. We belong to the story of God's people, and recounting what God has done, especially in the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ, belongs to our very essence. Telling the story also keeps us humble, for though it traces God's redemptive purposes, it also shows how humankind keeps frustrating his plans and his will. It's a story with deep tensions and contradictions.

Besides grasping what is real and the coherence of reality, and telling the grand narrative of God's purposes with humankind, the word can also come as a command. The Calvinist tradition especially has sought to preserve this biblical insight. Looking deeply into the hardness of the human heart, it refuses to embrace the idea that once saved the believer will spontaneously begin to live the good life. We continue to need God's directives to tell us what sort of life is acceptable to him. Faith doesn't automatically give us an infusion of virtue, we still need to obey those laws that God has laid down for human existence for our own well-being. But especially for the well-being of others. Even in the New Testament we still need to be commanded to love one another and how to do that. The Christian life is a life of obedience.

So besides giving us an overview of the world and our place in it, and giving us a long-term memory to pass on, the word also can give us a kick in the pants. Okay, perhaps that's an irreverent and not entirely accurate way to picture command, for it reminds us that God never leaves us on our own. He's nearby to nudge us in the right direction, but sometimes it takes much more than a nudge.

We can also use the word to make a promise. This is more than stating a fact, telling a story or giving a command. When we give someone a promise, something happens to tie us to him. We assume an obligation to carry through in the future. It puts demands on our character and integrity. To break a promise reflects on one's person. We don't give it much thought, but this power to make promises, such as in the exchange of wedding vows, is a marvelous thing.

It is even more marvelous when God himself makes promises.

When Adam is put in the garden, he quickly learns the word of command: Don't eat from the tree. He is soon naming the animals and so coming to know his world. And then he listens to a story that flatters his ear. In short order, he finds himself outside, naked and alienated and afraid. But he is not left without hope and something to cling to, for God gives our first parents a promise – the mother promise – that Satan and death will one day be overcome.

Abraham Kuyper points out somewhere that the entire history of redemption can be seen as threaded together like a necklace, with God's repeated words of promise opening up the story every time it threatens to run into a dead end.

When the world threatens to dissolve into debauchery and sin, God comes to Noah and gives him a command. After the flood he seals a promise with Noah and all humanity with the rainbow sign. Abraham, the father of all believers, is given an almost unbelievable promise – that his seed will be as numerous as the sand on the seashore and the stars in the night sky, and that through him all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

And so it goes from generation to generation. Despite Israel's repeated abandonment of their God and their whoring after idols, God keeps sending his word, renewing his promise. Yes, the prophets utter more judgments than promises, but the purpose of all that prophetic bluster is God's promise of the restoration of his righteousness, which will carry the people forward into God's future.

Faith transforms the very nature of the world we live in. Christians don't live in a world in which truth is nothing more than a correspondence of word with fact or some concept of the whole. Nor is truth dependent on our ability to keep our memories and traditions vital and fresh. Nor is truth a slavish adherence to a discipline or to some idea of virtue.

It is by his promises that God keeps renewing us, and his promises are not confined to personal salvation and life with God after death. Though these are part of his promises. The fact that they are promises stored in God, however, makes all our quibbling about the nature of the soul, life after death or the intermediate state seem largely irrelevant. None of these things depend on what we are, but on who God is, and all those promises are safe in him.

But from the beginning his promises are much bigger than the rescue of individual souls. Prophets like Isaiah evoke visions of a world transformed, a nature renewed, nations coming from afar to worship the true God, all of history swept up into the great crucible of redemption. The whole cosmos begins to sing a new song. Simply by holding on to his promises given to Israel and fulfilled and renewed with power in Jesus Christ, we can be part of that grand victory march.

In Christ we are now a new creation and we are living in the new age. The future is already penetrating into the present in numerous ways. Believers are told that they already have eternal life, which seems to contradict the fact that we all must die, but in Christ all God's promises are so sure, so safe, that it is like having it now already.

It is true that in the light of God's extravagant promises, the pale tattered reality of our lives and of our churches makes us ashamed, guilty. God's promises have that effect, too: they are a call to repentance. But it's not so that we'll toe the line for it's own sake.

We live in God's promises and by his word because that's the way to fulfill our calling as human beings, that's how our lives get meaning.

And then comes another use of the word: praise, doxology, glorifying God. The whole creation does it, but we have been given special gifts to make music onto the Lord. By faith in the promises of God made throughout the ages and fully revealed in Christ, we become heirs with him and our works are taken up into his great purposes.

We may not see that very clearly. We sing, "All of my ambitions, hopes and plans – I surrender them into your hands." Some of us sing a bit shamefacedly, looking back at the mess we've made of much of our lives, while some of us figure we're pretty important and we aren't really quite ready to surrender. But in the end, it is Christ's righteousness that we put on, not our own, and it is his new creation that will be our home, not what we have made of this world.

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Letters

A plea for further dialogue that addresses Ontario's unique educational justice challenges

The spreading discussion about the plight of Canada's needed public policy reforms, as well as the intensifying debate about the changing face of Toronto and Canada produce provocative contributions to a much-needed dialogue, also regarding Faith-based School Funding.

Such discussions are necessary if we, together, are to develop a dynamic multi-cultural, truly pluralistic society – a society that is a living demonstration of Canada's determination to be a nation expressive of genuine freedom, hope, compassion, equality, justice, "peace, order, and good government."

Progressive Conservative Leader John Tory's proposal to bring non-Catholic, faith-based schools into the public system if they so choose and agree to meet certain "strict criteria and accountability requirements," clearly deserves further in-depth reflection and public debate.

Our cultural and political leaders as well as informed opinion-makers can render a real service if they openly put their different views and specific suggestions on the table in a spirit that seeks to build a nation that is truly strong and free, respects our diversity and protects all people, without discrimination of any kind.

Now that John Tory has announced that former Premier Bill Davis, one of Ontario's leading pioneers of tolerance and diversity in public education has agreed to help find the best way to bring even more of Ontario students into our public education system, it is imperative that all Ontario politicians speak their mind. Especially the Liberal and the NDP Leaders and local candidates who have been both silent and negative about this basic public-justice issue.

John Tory is right: "Ontario has funded faith-based education to varying degrees since Confederation. This inclusive approach has proven to be successful in managing and respecting religious diversity within public education. It has taught children of different ethnicities and faiths to value our respective religious and cultural heritage, while also being unified by common standards and equivalent experiences.

"Faith groups," he suggests, "have said that they feel betrayed by Dalton McGuinty for offering them vague reassurances in private on this issue, and then engaging in divisive rhetoric in public." John Tory has said he would "speak openly and welcome discussion about this plan to reduce the separation that exists between students in faith-based schools and those operating in the public system."

Specifically, he has said that a John Tory PC Government would:

- Preserve and strengthen Ontario's public school system;
- Expand the system subject to clear conditions to reflect and embrace the changing diversity of our population;
- Use this expanded system to bring people together and promote integration within Ontario's public education system, both through academic programming and extracurricular activities;
- Ensure that, with public funding, comes public accountability, including requirements to teach the Ontario curriculum, stand-ardized testing and teacher credentialing.

According to John Tory, "The Public Education Fairness Implementation Commission, which would be chaired by former Premier and former Education Minister, the Hon. William G. Davis, will ensure that this expansion is undertaken after significant public consultation and with solid and responsible planning, with pilot programs beginning in September 2008."

Ontario citizens and politicians alike, whether as proponents and opponents of public funding for faith-based schools owe it to themselves and public dialogue to speak their minds constructively.

Candid exchanges would have to include honest, critical assessment of Canada's and Ontario's respective rights and responsibilities under the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and such relevant laws as the Ontario Human Rights Code.

As our Governor General, Michaëlle Jean remarked in her Installation Speech of Sept. 27, 2005: "the time of the 'two solitudes' that for too long described the character of this country is passed. The narrow notion of 'every person for himself' does not belong in today's world, which demands that we learn to see beyond our wounds, beyond our differences for the good of all. Quite the contrary: we must eliminate the spectre of all solitudes and promote solidarity among all the citizens who make up the Canada of today. As well, we must make good use of our prosperity and our influence wherever the hope that we represent offers the world an extra measure of harmony."

Therefore, further dialogue that addresses Ontario's educational justice challenges in terms of "fairness" is a moral must!

Gerald Vandezande, C.M.
Scarborough, ON Tel: 416-293-8912

Re: John Tory puts faith in school religion

I welcome John Tory's pledge to appoint Bill Davis to head a commission to find the best way to bring faith-based schools into the public system.

Our child attends an excellent, fully accredited, Christian high school that receives no public funds, even though we pay all the same taxes as everyone else does. There he receives an excellent education that is fully engaged with Canadian culture. We have chosen this school because the teaching there is faithful to our understanding of what it means to be followers of Jesus Christ. What good is faith if doesn't shape our lives? However, our school choice requires a major financial sacrifice that others, though they would like to, simply cannot afford.

I urge all parties to enter into a discussion on this subject because it is high time to end the discrimination in Ontario where some get a publicly funded education in keeping with their faith and others do not. Most other Canadians already have publicly funded choices.

John Meiboom,
Toronto

North Korea *... continued from page 2*

Kim Jong Il, is thawing. He has only a few months/years to live, according to what I hear. The six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons program is getting a lot done these days. This is because Kim Jong Il wants to take advantage of George W. Bush's waning popularity and gain the maximum amount of carrots for its nukes – before he's done in. In the end, I think North Korea will open up and accept more foreign aid and aid workers. Currently they want to convert the foreign relief aid to developmental aid by being accepted into the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. For that to be done, the U.S. government must drop North Korea from its terrorist-supporting countries list.

Is relief work in China and other border areas getting more difficult?

Because of the pre-Beijing Olympic crackdowns on any potential source of negative news on China, it's getting really tough at the border.

It is said that there are between 200,000 and 400,000 Christians in North Korea, and that about 50,000-70,000 of them are in labor camps – do those estimates seem accurate to you?

I think it could be true, but you never know anything for sure with North Korea.

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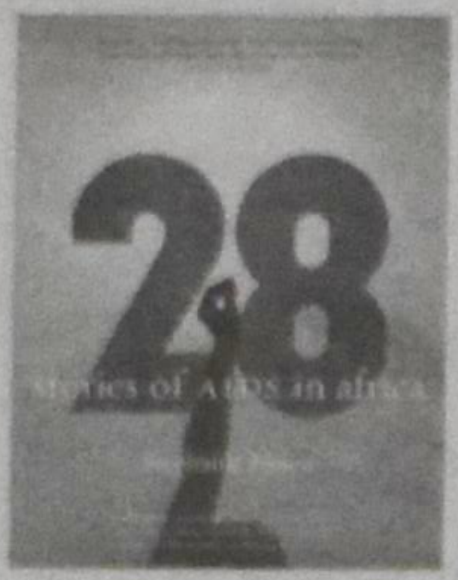
Ideas/Review

AIDS is not just a pandemic, but the story of millions of individuals



28 Stories of AIDS in Africa
by Stephanie Nolen,
Alfred A. Knopf,
Canada, 2007,
399 pages, $34.95
(on sale $24.46)

Reviewed by Rev. John de Vries Jr.

Since hearing Stephen Lewis, UN Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS in Africa, speak in London, Ontario, I have been deeply impacted by the stories of people with HIV/AIDS. Lewis' talk and learning about the lives of HIV/AIDS orphans prompted me to join in the April 26, Boston Marathon for HIV/AIDS orphans' awareness. No literature that I was able to find brought me face to face with HIV/AIDS as did reading Stephanie Nolen's shocking and courageous book, *28 Stories of AIDS in Africa*.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is the worst health disaster in the history of humankind. It is estimated that 28 million are living with the virus today. This prompted Nolen to write the 'biggest story in the world today". In North America HIV/AIDS has become a lingering chronic disease since drugs are now available for those who can pay. For $12,000 to $25,000 per month persons with HIV/AIDS can take a daily drug cocktail to postpone death. In Africa the limited economic resources and other realities make the fight against HIV/AIDS a much greater challenge.

In 2003, Nolen, a recipient of Amnesty International Award for Human Rights Reporting, convinced the editors of *The Globe and Mail*, that they were missing the HIV/AIDS story. After having worked as a journalist in the Middle East she knew about "the thrill that comes with being in the centre of the big story." But she writes, "nothing that I was sent to cover anywhere in the world compared to what I saw AIDS doing in sub-Sahara Africa. And yet this story never made the news at all." With her new assignment, Nolen moved to Johannesburg.

The many factors at work – socio-economic, political, tradition, biomedical and religious– make it impossible to present an armchair analysis of both the HIV/AIDS pandemic's devastating effects and the concurrent glimmers of hope. As a consequence Nolen went to search out people whose personal experiences made the complex issue come alive. Reading her book is a gut-wrenching, informative, and inspiring experience. It deeply enriches the readers' experience of the struggles and victories of persons with HIV/AIDS – that is, the poor and the rich, the illiterate and the educated, the preacher and the prostitute, the children and the caring grandparents, the HIV husband and the uninfected spouse, and the silent sufferer and the death-defying community activist. Determined to seek and tell the truth, Nolen brings the reader along as she talks with HIV-AIDS persons visited across the sub-Sahara Africa. These included persons living in villages and slums, where she found persons with HIV/AIDS staying in truck stops, hospitals, huts, bedrooms and counseling clinics.

Nolen observes closely and respectfully the persons she meets and visits. Her deep passion, her commitment to research, and her holistic approach makes this book a 'must buy'. Her personal style captivates the reader's interest to dig deeper. Nolen's experiences and relationships with the persons she writes about provide a living and human background to her research and rich analysis of the many factors that impact the persons coping with HIV/AIDS. A good listener, the author provides 'safe space' for the person to talk about his/her story in the African continent where HIV/AIDS 'silence' is the operative norm.

"I looked at AIDS in Africa for a long time," writes Nolen, "before I understood what I was seeing. That moment came on a shady porch in a village called Nkhotakota in Malawi, early in 2002. The house belonged to Lillian." The chapters that follow share individual stories that shape the devastating HIV/AIDS effects and the resilient responses of persons 'not dying from AIDS but living through AIDS.

In Africa HIV/AIDS affects all. Poverty is at the root of the pandemic but Nolen makes it clear that often times those who are richer are equally dévastated by HIV/AIDS.

In the introductory chapter she records her 1998 visit to a rural Tanzania hospital. She asked if the patient had AIDS. "A nurse seized her arm and began to pull me out of the ward. 'Shh, shh, shh,' she scolded,' You can't just say that word'." The silence about AIDS is a theme that recurs throughout the book. The shame, stigma, and shunning of HIV/AIDS persons is unrelenting.

After seeing the devastations the disease was "wreaking in country after country I visited … I persuaded my editors that we were missing something important."

Nolen's passion to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic is evident. "Over the years, I've learned the way to work in war zones: get in, get the story and get out without getting hurt. Reporting on AIDS is different … AIDS is not an event, or a series of them; it's a mirror held up to the cultures and societies that we build."

The first story highlights Siphiwe from Swaziland. Siphiwe got a scholarship to study for a master's degree in England. At the passport office, it was discovered that she had AIDS. No scholarship. AIDS made her a community

Eternal Student
Peter Schuurman

Middle-class as messianic mediocrity

When I was single and living pretty lean off the earth I had opportunity to feel that I was imitating Christ with some degree of integrity. Jesus had no home, no woman to warm him at night, and his life centered around teaching the crowds, healing the sick, and preaching about good news for the poor. Life was lived raw and spontaneous, open to serve everyone.

In the last few years I have married a wife, bought me some land, and settled into a comfortable middle-class home near a city park. I have a healthy young son who plays beneath my feet. As I write, my financial investments are doing what the Wealthy Barber says: compounding interest. Life has taken on a settled feeling, and imitating the pilgrim Jesus seems like a farther stretch.

I feel compromised when I see the counter-cultural lifestyle of some Christians. I've been to visit an agrarian collective where my colleague Brian Walsh now lives north of Toronto. Four families live there and produce their own electricity through solar panels and raise much of their food through farm animals and their large garden. Like Jesus, they get dusty feet and share their food with each other, while educating students and visitors.

I've also just read Shane Claiborne's energetic book *The Irresistible Revolution: Living As An Ordinary Radical.* He talks about living with the homeless on the street, hugging children in Iraq as the bombs fall, and working with Mother Teresa in India's slums. Its quite spectacular Christian activism.

Watered down Christianity?

I'm tempted to say, as Kierkegaard said, that I am not a Christian. Kierkegaard said it because he wanted to own up to the ideal in Christ and be honest about what he did not truly imitate. This way he could also point out how others were even less genuine Christians. "The history of Christendom," he said, "from generation to generation, became a story of steadily scaling down the price of what it is to be a Christian." Christ seems to have more admirers, he concludes, than genuine imitators.

Some days here in our cozy Guelph home we have extended conversations about how to better steward the resources we have. In our household we have two cars polluting the air, two computers sucking electricity, and we are deeply invested in a society that sways a global market, which we suspect disadvantages the disadvantaged further.

What does Christian integrity mean for the middle-class? Can there be integrity where there is no risk of loss? Even if you wanted to, where do you find the time to discern what is truly right and wrong, not to mention the energy to act on it? Must we be resigned to feeling a little fraudulent, like imposters for Christ?

We could give up all we have and go to Africa. We've played with the idea. But recently a visiting scholar from Sri Lanka urged his audience to stay home and don't mess up the rest of the world any further with ill-considered paternalizing interference. "Just stop your companies from making us irreversibly dependent on you!" he pleaded. Still, we might do *some* good overseas. It is possible. But we are here now and seem called to serve where we are. Reformed theology has always emphasized how Christian vocation is more than missionaries overseas. Redemptive culture-making is what God made us for – in businesses, arts, sciences and recreation. But how can we be faithful to God's call to love the poor when implicated in systems of global inequity?

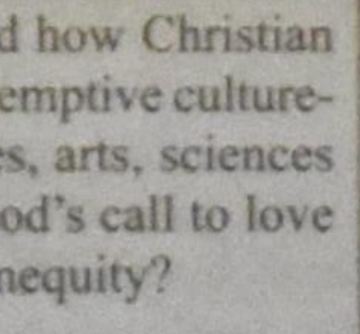
The Good Life

The Good Life: Genuine Christianity for the Middle Class (Brazos, 2004) by David Matzko McCarthy offers some hope. He suggests by incarnating the Scriptures into our lives and thinking theologically about everything we do – what we consume, how we relate to neighbours, make friends, parent our kids, and construct our work habits – we can genuinely "seek first the kingdom." Social pressures militate against it, but it is possible to live with generosity, grace and love in suburbia.

On a broader scale, *Hope in Troubled Times: A New Vision for Confronting Global Crises* by Goudzwaard, Vander Vennen and VanHeemst (Baker, 2007) suggests policies that might mitigate the growing gap between rich and poor. There are ways for those with influence to do things differently, working for justice, freedom, stewardship, and shalom.

Suburbia need not be an insular, narcissistic wilderness. There are co-op garden opportunities, the 100-mile diet, community festivals and awareness-raising events, and simple everyday acts of kindness that truly make a difference. We know from our own neighbourhood that some middle-class homes are places of fractured relationships and dark loneliness. There is a profound poverty in the long, clean rows of the "suburban waste-land", and we can cultivate loving Christian community in its midst. With the help of the church, we can think "glocal" and strive to be true.

Still, I feel uneasy, dissatisfied, and convicted that there is much more to be said, and much more to be done.



Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader and resides in Guelph, Ontario.

outcast. But as often happens in Africa, she did not leave her husband who later came back to apologize for infecting her. Siphiwe in her commitment to fight HIV is the first of the many 'hero' stories.

In another story Stephanie finds herself inspired by Tigist, a 14 year-old orphan girl who has looked after her brother since she was ten. She travelled with Mohammed Ali, a married trucker, who "reckoned he had had sex with 100,000 women," but he says "my wife doesn't know I had all these partners." This is one big clue about the spread of AIDS.

In Uganda the reader meets Dr. Lydia, whose immunity has shut down and every organ is affected. Her CD4 cell count, or helper T cell in the blood, normally about 1,000 per cubic millimeter, was down to one CD4 cell. Another hero – she survived "from the support of my family and friends, the second was that Uganda was open. Drugs are the third. But love and support – those were first."

The reader visits with Noe, who rose out of Burundi poverty and became one of six persons out of 35,000 to graduate high school. After his wife and his daughter died of AIDS, Noe began Stop SIDA (AIDS). It was an heroic effort, but only a few thousand in Burundi had access to ARV's (antiretroviral drugs) first announced in 1996 by Dr. David Ho at the Vancouver International AIDS Conference.

The stories are as tragic as they are amazing. Cynthia, the beauty queen, did well with ARV's but it didn't remove the public stigma of AIDS. At thirty years of age, a few months older than the author, Mfanimpela "has outlived his entire family." Angualem, an Ethiopian youth, made it into the military service but with AIDS his career is shattered – despite getting a medal from the prime minister for his efforts against AIDS. Zackie, from Cape Town, one of three million countrymen with AIDS was destined for death. He went public, started the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), and eight years later mounted the public stage with Nelson Mandela in their common fight against AIDS.

HIV/AIDS, painted by some critics as the deserved judgment of God, is evidence of our fallen humanity – as is cancer, measles and other illnesses. My first acquaintance with AIDS was in the early 1980's at a hospital where the 'AIDS patient' was caged like a leper whose breath had the power to infect and destroy. At that time we did not know HIV/AIDS was transmitted only by body fluids – blood, urine, semen and mother's breast milk. (The reason so many children have AIDS). Nolen's first microscopic view of the HIV virus made her 'gasp out loud: HIV looks nasty, a sphere bristling with small vicious spikes'. The tentatively understood origins of AIDS are described. Not all Africans agree with white man's version of the origin of AIDS. What does matter to everyone is finding a vaccine to prevent and eradicate AIDS.

Agnes' story is sad. But it may have the potential for unlocking the AIDS mystery. Agnes is a prostitute – one of the many women who prostitute to survive. Like Agnes some of these prostitutes never acquired AIDS despite daily exposure to it. When they stop the sex trade, AIDS catches up with them. What does Agnes and persons like her have that resists AIDS? Today Agnes is older but still at her trade to earn money to support herself and her family.

Community activism has spurred on the hopes of many of the 28 HIV/AIDS persons. The major hope is focused on the discovery of a vaccine for AIDS. Pontiano, a medical graduate from Kenya's Makerere University has committed his life to AIDS research. After two decades he says hopefully, 'we may have a vaccine in ten years….but a world without AIDS may not happen in our lifetime." Since the book went to press, Bill Gates and Bill Clinton jointly announced the allocation of billions of dollars for the AIDS research.

What about the role of religion and churches? Traditional beliefs, practices and the stigma of AIDS have not given religion a good track record. Pockets of church initiatives, according to Nolen, have been supportive (like CRWRC) but often they are overshadowed by the sermons and declarations of judgmental Christians.

Reverend Canon Gideon, a Kenyan Anglican priest, provides a refreshing religious perspective that may shock those who label AIDS as the punishment of God. "God should be left out of this…. God did his part when he showed how AIDS is transmitted. If God wanted to punish us we would still be searching … we knew the roots of prolonging life. God gave us wisdom."

Life with AIDS has changed the priest's life. "We can defeat AIDS if we do the right things."

The chapter on Nelson Mandela's story was the book's highlight for me. It relates what I call the untold story of Mandela's most recent conversion. January 6, 2006, when Nelson announced his son's death from HIV/IDS, it was his moment of truth. It became a call for South Africa and the world to fight against AIDS. Mandela's ANC friends, who had always applauded him, now heckled him and spoke of him as a 'crazy man'. As prime minister of South Africa Mandela had given little attention to the AIDS. At age 89, the fight against AIDS has become his priority.

Another source of hope in addressing

See AIDS review on p. 8

Development vs. farmland

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

It's a tension – and rightly so! It's a tension that drives us to greater scrutiny and higher levels of land stewardship. Consider what has happened in the Niagara fruit-farm belt where I grew up. I can recall how the QEW was like a boulevard, and there was an abundance of fruit trees. I used to pick from many of those trees around the Grimsby, Fruitland and Winona area. Where are those trees now? For what purpose were they uprooted? More highways and more buildings! All that development in prime fruit-growing land, whereas equally suitable land is available just a few kilometers south up on the escarpment, land that has a much more limited agricultural value.

Was there tension back then that might have re-directed where the development would go?

Recently, we were asked to erect a large portable sign on the frontage of our farm property by the 'Stop the 424' protest group. At issue is land that is now being farmed or is considered ecologically sensitive, and which forms part of the Grand River basin. There are at least three paths that the new Highway 424 could take to connect Highway 403 near Brantford to Highway 401 northeast of Cambridge. Of the variations proposed however, the favoured one is the one that impacts the most farmland.

Why is it that farmland seems to lose out in the battle for development space – time and time again? Several reasons come to mind, reasons that organizations like the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario are eager help Canadians understand:

- Farmland is easy to develop
- Farmland is cheap to buy compared to the alternatives
- For the same area of land there are fewer people to deal with
- Weak competition: farm profits per acre just cannot compete and cover all the costs
- Farmers are getting old and leaving – more sell out each year and few new farmers are coming in
- Appreciation for farming is in decline: the ecologists carry more sway – sensitive land gets protected before Class 1 farmland
- Weak farm connections: the urban-rural disconnect is growing
- Decline of the family farm and rural population
- The trend to fewer and bigger industrial type farm operations

Farmland needs a stronger voice. Each acre taken out of farm production is another acre of land that no longer works to reduce carbon dioxide. Given the rising carbon dioxide levels today, an important part of the solution is more agriculture and forestry – more green space – including rooftop gardens and extensive green landscaping around our homes.

Back to the sign: yes, we agreed to have it placed. As you approach Cambridge you'll see it. We hope it will raise awareness and cause people to look up the website or seek more information. We are not opposed to development of the 424 (traffic through Cambridge is very inefficient); rather we hope that our fellow citizens will favour a route that has the least impact on farmland and makes better use of existing roadway right-of-ways to handle the growth of our community. It is also hoped that more may be done to improve mass transit service in our area. This will also be encouraged if we continue to direct the developers and planners to think of more land- stewardly alternatives.

The tension should stay: it's healthy and makes for better land stewardship.

Stewardly tip: Pop bottle irrigation. A reader shares how she waters her tomatoes and squash using large pop bottles and margarine tubs or tin cans. She takes the tubs or tin cans (large enough to support the pop bottles) and drills or cuts a few holes into their bottoms and then digs (2-3") each one vertically into the ground beside each plant. Then she fills the pop bottles and places each one upside down into a can or tub she has dug in. The water releases slowly into the soil and keeps the root zone moist without causing caking of the surface soil and minimizes losses of water due to evaporation. She says she rarely fills the bottles more than once a week to keep her plants happy.

Readers: Share your Stewardly Tips so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: A Question of Ownership

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca

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Church

Corfu archbishop says Catholics face 'discrimination' in Greece

By Jonathan Luxmoore

Corfu, Greece, (ENI) – A leader of Greece's Roman Catholic minority has said his church faces a "hopeless situation" after being denied legal recognition and equal rights in the predominantly Orthodox country.

"We're not persecuted; we just don't have the same rights as the Orthodox majority," said Yannis Spiteris, the Archbishop of Corfu, Zante and Cefalonia.

"The Greek government doesn't recognize the Catholic Church, so officially we don't exist," said Spiteris. "Although I was born here, I'm treated as a foreign or, at best, a second-class citizen. It's a rather hopeless situation."

In an interview with Ecumenical News International, the archbishop said his Catholic See, founded in 1310, included three cardinals among its 64 previous incumbents. Now, however, it has only seven priests, three monks and nine nuns, and the registered membership is just 3500 spread across six parishes.

The archbishop added that his church has no formal contacts with the Orthodox Church of Greece, which claims the spiritual loyalty of 98 percent of the country's 10.7 million people.

"Although local people are peaceful and law abiding, they aren't very religious. Though they don't reject the Church, they're generally indifferent to it," the archbishop told ENI. "We've tried to renew enthusiasm for the Catholic faith through youth work and other initiatives but we depend on the energy and generosity of tourists to provide encouragement and reassurance."

Religious minorities have often complained of discrimination in Greece, which is a member of the European Union and NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Oranization). Greece's constitution declares Orthodoxy the "dominant religion" and requires public office-holders to take an oath before an Orthodox priest.

In June 2006, Greek parliamentarians voted to strip the Orthodox Church of Greece, whose clergy receive state-paid salaries, of its right to approve the construction of non-Orthodox places of worship, after calls for a review of the church's constitutional status.

However, Archbishop Spiteris said the Catholic minority continues to be denied legal recognition or access to public funding, while Catholic clergy face problems maintaining their church's historic buildings, as well as obtaining health cover or access to gas and electricity.

"We don't want privileges as a national church, just equal treatment and an end to discrimination," said Spiteris.

The Corfu archdiocese is one of four in Greece's Catholic Church, which has 50,000 Greek members and around 150,000 foreign adherents.

During a December 2006 visit to the Vatican, the Greek Orthodox Church's leader, Archbishop Christodoulos, signed a joint declaration with the Pope pledging "fruitful collaboration" as well as "a dialogue in truth with a view to re-establishing the full communion of faith in the bond of love."

Spiteris, however, told ENI that calls for ties with Catholics had been criticized by other Orthodox bishops. He added that Greece's governing centre-right New Democracy Party and socialist PASOK opposition party were "afraid to risk conflict with the Orthodox Church" by supporting further legal and constitutional reforms.

"Since the Second Vatican Council, even without being in communion, Catholics have recognized Orthodox sacraments and changed their attitudes," Spiteris said. "But the Orthodox simply haven't reciprocated. They insist on living apart and speaking by themselves."

Egypt: mobs attack churches near Alexandria

ISTANBUL (Compass Direct News) – Muslim rioters attacked two Coptic Orthodox churches, damaged Christian-owned shops and injured seven Christians in two unrelated incidents in northern Egypt during the past week, local Christians said.

Witnesses said that a mob in Zawyet Abdel-Qader, 20 miles west of Alexandria, had freely vandalized the town's Christian quarter for 90 minutes the night of June 8 before police intervened.

In a second incident in Dekheila, six miles west of Alexandria, police immediately halted a mob attack on the Church of the Holy Virgin on June 12, preventing all but minimal damage from occurring.

Local Christians confirmed that each attack was triggered by a fight between a Muslim and a Christian, but Akram Anwar Bekheed, a local member of the National Democratic Party (NDP) in Zawyet Abdel-Qader, laid partial responsibility on the government.

Bekheed said that the government had created a permissive atmosphere for sectarian violence by allowing previous attacks on churches to go unpunished in the interest of keeping peace.

In April 2006, Alexandria was the scene of three attacks on churches that killed one Christian and left a dozen more injured. The government appeared unable or unwilling to halt subsequent vandalism of Coptic-owned shops and churches, blaming the initial attacks on a man they said was mentally unstable.

In a more recent incident in January, local sources said that violent Muslims had attacked a church-owned social services building in southern Zawyet Abdel-Qader, damaging the doors and windows. Hours later, police oversaw the bulldozing of the building, despite the fact that the church had obtained a permit from Alexandria's governor.

Local Christians in Zawyet Abdel-Qader said that last week's attack followed a June 7 argument between a Christian truck driver and a Muslim teenager who refused to move out of his truck's path on a narrow street. Both young men's fathers became involved in the fight, and police eventually arrested the four men.

Eyewitnesses said that on June 8, after mid-day prayers, Muslim worshipers exiting the mosque began congregating at local coffee shops.

"We felt that there was some sort of conspiracy, and we couldn't understand what it was," local Christians told visitors to Zawyet Abdel-Qader. They said that men from outside the town arrived at the coffee shops carrying large bags, which they said they later found out contained swords, daggers and flammable material.

At 9:45 p.m. the Muslims marched to the Christian quarter of town, where they began attacking Christian homes and shops. Local Copts attempted to defend their property, seven of them sustaining injuries during the fighting.

Mariam Adel, 24, suffered burns from an acid solution while grocery store owner Yasser Agaibi received stab wounds to his head, face and back and had to be hospitalized. A poultry and fish shop owned by Abdel Messih Sidqy and a bakery co-owned by Khairi Rizq and William Butros also sustained damage.

"They broke glass and windows and looted the shops," one source told Compass.

A telephone calling center owned by Nashat Mitiass was badly damaged in the attack. "My losses amount to approximately 40,000 Egyptian pounds [LE]," he told visitors to the town.

"Considering it's a poor neighborhood, 40,000 LE is a fortune," one Copt commented to Compass. "Here they can't get loans from banks and his place was not insured."

The mob had just turned its efforts toward the St. Mary and St. Mercurius Church when law enforcement arrived and halted the violence. The church sustained relatively little damage.

"Zawyet Abdel-Qadir is an informal settlement that grew up around the railway line," one Egyptian observer told Compass. "There is not much law enforcement there and there are a lot of Islamists."

Police reportedly detained eight Muslims and 10 Christians at the Amriya police station, though no further details were available.

Street violence

Four days later, on June 12 at 9 p.m., tension flared between 16-year-old Christian Bassem Mikail and 21-year-old Muslim Abdel-Dayem, both construction workers, directly in front of Dekheila's Holy Virgin church. The conflict escalated into a street fight between local Muslims and Christians, and the Muslims launched an attack on the nearby church, throwing bottles and stones.

A church guard quickly closed the church gates and called police, who immediately arrived and surrounded the church, quelling all violence.

According to Christian members of the ruling NDP, police arrested 15 Copts and seven Muslims. Compass sources said that four Christians were referred to the state prosecutor, who charged them with assault. No charges have been brought against the other 11, who remain in detention.

The source also said that three charges of assault, destruction and inciting people to destruction have been brought against the seven Muslims, one of whom is the imam (Muslim cleric) of a mosque next to the church.

Attacks against Christians have been on the rise in recent months. In May, Muslims in the town of Bemha attacked Christian homes after hearing a rumor that the community was building a new church.

According to Coptic editor and columnist Youssef Sidhom, sectarian violence will continue to erupt in Egypt as long as underlying issues remain unaddressed.

"Fanatic thought, the culture of rejection of the other, and the curtailed freedom of worship, if left unchecked, constitute a time bomb that can go off any minute," Sidhom stated in his June 10 column in Coptic weekly *Watani*.

Coptic Christians are estimated to make up 8 to 15 percent of Egypt's population. The majority of these belong to the Coptic Orthodox Church.

***AIDS** review cont. from p. 7*

sub-Sahara HIV/AIDS is the work of Doctors Without Borders (DWB or MSF). The MSF was disgusted with traditional aid groups' (i.e. Red Cross) slowness to act in crisis situations and their failure to speak out on human rights violations. After 1996 MSF got drugs to Africans as no other organization or country did. Their process was accelerated in rural areas, where they focused on visible symptoms rather than time consuming laboratory tests. In recognition of the shortage of doctors MSF used community-based clinics staffed by nurses. MSF's active and effective life-saving responses were not curtailed by official board decisions. This model may serve as a helpful guide for organizations paid by the billions of dollars more recently set aside for the fight against HIV/AIDS in Africa.

Since Nolen began her book, the world silence on AIDS has lifted. The disease has peaked but the death rate has not declined. As evident in the 28 stories, the cost of drugs for HIV/AIDS is still out reach for most Africans. One major breakthrough was announced December 2006. Bill Clinton successfully negotiated a deal with major India drug companies. It made generic HIV/AIDS drug available for HIV/AIDS children at a greatly reduced cost of 16 cents a day.

"Each day 5,500 persons die of AIDS in sub-Sahara Africa," says Nolens. "We have 28 million reasons to fight HIV/AIDS." Before one is motivated to go to Africa to help, however, read the book and you may be challenged to find better ways to act at home, in the church, and the community where you live. After reading my library copy of "28 Stories of AIDS in Africa", I bought my own copy. It is a valuable and important book for every person who is a living member of the human race –and even more so for every Christian who is related to all members of God's family locally and globally.

London, Ontario.

S. African apartheid officials face trial for attack on church leader

David Wanless

Cape Town (ENI) – South Africa's former minister of police in the last apartheid era government, Adriaan Vlok, and the police chief under his watch, Johann van der Merwe, are to be charged with attempted murder, the country's National Prosecuting Authority has said.

The authority's spokesperson, Panyaza Lesufi, said the two men and three other former high-ranking police officials are expected to appear in court on 17 August. They will be tried for a 1989 attack on the Rev. Frank Chikane, who, at the time, was the general secretary of the South African Council of Churches, an organization at the forefront of the struggle against minority white rule.

This is the first case of the prosecution of apartheid-era atrocities in which alleged perpetrators were denied or did not seek amnesty from South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was led by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, retired archbishop Desmond Tutu. In 1999, Vlok was granted amnesty by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for a number of acts, including the bombing of the headquarters of the South African Council of Churches at Khotso House, and the COSATU trade union headquarters.

"We have decided to prosecute the five men on various charges, including conspiracy and the attempted murder of Chikane," Lesufi said on July 17. "We believe we have a very strong case against the men and are ready to prosecute." Chikane is now director general of President Thabo Mbeki's office.

Evidence was given during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings, held after South Africa's first universal suffrage elections, that Chikane's clothing had been impregnated with chemicals that attacked his nervous system. Chikane mysteriously fell ill during a visit to the United States 18 years ago but recovered after treatment.

Now aged 70, Vlok, in September 2006, asked Chikane to forgive him, and washed the government official's feet as an act of penitence during a meeting in the capital Pretoria. Later he repeated the foot-washing gesture with others who had been victimized by his actions.

Lesufi said those facing charges were to have been taken to court in 2004 after failing to apply for amnesty from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The prosecuting authority decided, however, not to prosecute them at the time, saying it had sought to solve the matter through discussions with a legal team representing the accused men.

Malaysian Christians raise new religious freedom concerns

Michele Green

Singapore (ENI) – Malaysian Christians have expressed fresh worries that the govern-ment may be infringing their religious freedom, after the country's deputy prime minister described Malaysia as "an Islamic state".

The Christian Federation of Malaysia issued a statement on July 19 urging Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak to retract comments he made two days earlier when speaking to reporters. Then, the deputy prime minister had said, "Islam is the official religion and Malaysia is an Islamic State, an Islamic State that respects the rights of non-Muslims, and we protect them."

Razak's remarks follow a series of court cases in Malaysia that dealt with religious matters and that heightened fears among Malaysia's religious minorities that the south-east Asian country might be losing its character as a secular state with a Muslim majority, and instead is becoming an Islamic state.

"The Christian Federation of Malaysia appeals to the deputy prime minister to retract his aforesaid remarks, and to the government to refrain from the use of the term 'Islamic State' in the description of Malaysia, and instead to vigorously advocate the description of Malaysia as a secular constitutional democracy," said Bishop Paul Tan Chee Ing, head of the Christian Federation of Malaysia.

The federation said the description of Malaysia as "an Islamic state" contradicted the country's constitution, which, "guarantees the right of all religious communities to co-exist and relate with each other on an equal basis as citizens of a one and united country."

Recently, in a number of high-profile cases, some Malaysians have failed in attempts to get the State to stop recognizing them as Muslims.

In one case, a woman who was born a Muslim but converted to Christianity failed to be recognized as a Christian, and thus was unable to marry her Christian fiancé. Another woman, born a Muslim but raised a Hindu, was taken away from her Hindu husband and sent for religious re-education after the courts had rejected her request for the state to recognize her as a Hindu.

The cases were particularly emotive because under Malaysia's Islamic laws anyone born into a Muslim family cannot legally convert to another faith, and anyone marrying a Muslim must convert to Islam. Non-Muslim religious leaders say these court cases are among a string of disputes that have infringed on religious freedom in Malaysia.

Muslims make up about 60 percent of the country's 26 million population, which also includes Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Sikhs and other religious groups.

Ukrainian Catholics protest as US firm turns church into casino

Jonathan Luxmoore

Warsaw (ENI) – Roman Catholics in Ukraine have appealed for international support after a U.S.-owned company began converting a church into a casino.

"The authorities are laughing at us, thinking we can do nothing as they take the church to pieces under our eyes," said the Rev. Jan Sobilo, vicar-general of the Catholic church's Kharkiv-Zaporizhia diocese. "We have to do something. This is our only church in a city of more than one million."

Builders began removing the ceiling and roof of St Joseph's church at Dnipropetrovsk on July 20 at the request of a company named as California Dagsbury Inc., after evicting local parishioners, who had occupied the building in protest, and building a fence around the building.

In an interview with Ecumenical News International, Sobilo said Ukraine's president, Viktor Yushchenko, had requested an explanation from local government officials, while Catholics staged all-night prayer vigils on the street outside.

"I think this US firm hasn't been kept properly informed by its local bosses and doesn't realize this is a church," the vicar-general noted. "The city authorities know no one in the West would buy a church, so they've probably marketed it as just another ex-Soviet building."

After the 1991 collapse of Soviet rule, Catholic leaders requested the return of the 19th century St Joseph's Church, on Dnipropetrovsk's Karl Marx Prospect.

In July, Bishop Stanislaw Padewski of Kharkiv-Zaporizhia wrote to Pavlo Lazarenko, Ukraine's former prime minister, to request his help in saving the church. Lazarenko is reported to own shares in Dagbserry Inc. and to have helped the company buy the church from a Panamanian company.

However, church sources said the bishop had received no reply to his letter when company guards removed local parishioners from the church overnight on July 3 and fenced off the building on July 12.

St Joseph's Church

Sobilo said local representatives of the company had failed to produce documents proving their ownership of the church, and added that three Catholic women had been "brutally beaten" during the eviction.

"The local prosecutors have defended the firm's right to use the church as private property, and have deployed police to keep Catholics out and allow the casino to go ahead," the priest told ENI. "The only other places of worship we have here are a house belonging to the Capuchin order, and a small chapel with room for just 60. This explains why we're desperate to keep this church."

The Latin-rite Catholic church, which has 870 parishes in Ukraine, many of whose members are of Polish descent, has lamented numerous rebuffs while attempting to regain properties seized during the Soviet era.

Dutch minister's positive view of Islam triggers heritage debate

By Andreas Havinga

Utrecht, Netherlands (ENI) – Statements by the Netherlands government's integration minister Ella Vogelaar about the country's religious heritage and Islam have triggered strong reactions from some politicians, the public and in the media.

Vogelaar made her comments in an interview with the Dutch daily newspaper *Trouw*. She said that she wanted an end to Islam's negative image, and that Islam would eventually become an indigenous faith in her country, along with Christianity and Judaism.

However, Vogelaar also said that this change "may still take a couple of centuries" before it is fully achieved. Out of a total population of nearly 17 million in the Netherlands, about one million are Muslims. "I want to help them feel at home here," said Vogelaar. "Islam and Muslims must be able to put down roots here."

In an editorial, the *Reformatorisch Dagblad* (Reformed Daily) newspaper said that Vogelaar appeared to be accepting Islamic fundamentalism by comparing it with the Political Reformed Party (SGP), a fringe party whose voter base is among orthodox Reformed Christians.

Trouw, in its editorial, said that, while there are many ways in which immigrants can enrich Dutch culture, the core values in the country come from a Judaic-Christian origin and are not up for negotiation. "Immigrants are welcome, so long as they respect these values," said the newspaper.

The *Katholiek Nieuwsblad* (Catholic Newspaper) dismissed Vogelaar's vision as "naïve", and believed it "could result in the demise of our present Judaic-Christian culture and in Islamist domination of our large cities".

Others queried the government minister's mention of Judao-Christian traditions having shaped the Netherlands, and noted that the term "Judao-Christian" was of Christian coinage and had only been in use since the Second World War.

Amsterdam rabbi Elisa Klapheck welcomed the discussion but criticized Vogelaar's way of talking about religions. He said, "It shows little sensitivity and insight.

The minister's statements were, however, welcomed by the national council of Moroccan mosques. It called on two prominent politicians, Geert Wilders of the conservative Party for Freedom (PVV) and Mark Rutte of the Liberal Party (VVD), who are both seen as critical of Islam, to recognize that Islamic tradition does not differ much from the Judao-Christian tradition. The two party leaders had responded to Vogelaar's interview by criticizing her for not publicly declaring Dutch culture to be superior to Islamic culture.

The *Friesch Dagblad* (Frisian Daily), a regional newspaper, dismissed the heated public discussions about "Judao-Christian tradition" as unproductive. "The key point [of Vogelaar's interview] is: make sure that this country is one in which newcomers can put down roots."

"*What is God's purpose for his people?*" asks John Stott

One of Britain's finest preacher-theologians says incarnational evangelism will turn the world upside-down.

In his final public address Dr. John Stott addresses the question, 'What is God's purpose for his people?'

Michael Ireland

KESWICK, UNITED INGDOM (ANS) – Walking slowly and clutching a sturdy wooden cane, the 86-year-old Rev Dr Stott looked every bit the statesman that, in 2005, *Time* magazine called "One of the 100 most influential people on the planet today."

Echoing that accolade he also received a CBE (the honor of Commander of the British Empire bestowed by Queen Elizabeth the Second) in 2006 shortly before completing his 50th, and possibly his last book, *The Living Church* in 2007.

At the recent Keswick Convention in the Lake District of northern England, close to the end of his own journey, Dr. Stott called for "incarnational evangelism" as the way to turn the world upside down.

Having successfully passed the baton of leadership for the international church growth ministry he founded, the Langham Partnership, to the current International Director, the Rev Dr Chris Wright, John Stott is now enjoying a well-earned retirement in leafy Sussex in southern England. However, the opportunity to speak again at the Keswick Convention 2007 was enough to draw out another one of those memorable sermons so many have come to expect from this grand orator.

Walking slowly to the podium, and assisted by his research assistant, Chris Jones, John Stott was met by a standing ovation from a Convention tent filled to overflowing, on this warm summer evening of July 17, 2007. He began by thanking those who had introduced him in such glowing terms and then, in typically self-deferential fashion, he smiled and added, "But actually I thought I might be listening to my own obituary."

The theme: Christlikeness

John Stott clearly explained that the essence of what God is doing in the church today is the work of transforming his people into the image of his Son. Leading his audience from the past reality of predestination (Romans 8:29) through to the present work of transformation (2 Cor 3:18) and culminating in a glorious future (1 John 3:2) when we will discover that "we will be like Christ."

In vintage Stott style, the veteran theologian and preacher took the Keswick Convention along a clear and well-crafted journey through the evidence for this central purpose of God – to turn the world upside down by transforming his people into the image of his Son. But, he added, it's the church's lack of cooperation with this central purpose of God for his people that has been so damaging to our world.

Incarnational evangelism or entering into other people's worlds with Christ-likeness, Stott noted, is essential to the church's walk in the 21st century. However, our evangelistic efforts often lead to failure simply because we fail to look like the Christ we are proclaiming. Quoting John Poulton, Stott noted that, "The most effective preaching comes from those who embody their message. What communicates now are people, not words or ideas but rather personal authenticity, that is, Christ-likeness."

In his address, Stott said he remembers very vividly some years ago that the major question which perplexed him as a young Christian and some of his friends as well was this: "What is God's purpose for his people?"

"Granted that we had been converted, granted that we have been saved and received new life in Jesus Christ. What comes next?" he asked.

"Of course we knew the famous statement of the Westminster Shorter Catechism that 'Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.' We knew that and we believed it. We also toyed with some briefer statements like one of only five words 'Love God, Love your neighbor.' "

But somehow, said Stott, neither of these nor others we could mention seemed wholly satisfactory.

"So I want to share with you if I may this evening where my mind has come to rest as I approach the end of my pilgrimage on earth; and it is this. God wants his people to become like Christ. Christlikeness is the will of God for the people of God. So if that is true, I am proposing the following: I propose first to lay down the biblical basis for the call to Christlikeness. Secondly, I propose to give some New Testament examples of this. Thirdly, I propose to draw some practical conclusions; and it all relates to becoming like Christ.

The biblical basis

"So first, the biblical basis of the call to Christlikeness. This basis is not a single text – I haven't yet brought you a single text for the basis is more substantial than can be encapsulated in a single text. So the basis consists rather of three texts which we will do well to hold together in our Christian thinking and living. They are Romans 8: 29, no not Romans 8:28. We'll come to that a moment later. Romans 8:29, Second Corinthians 3:18 and 1 John 3:2. Let's look at these three quite briefly.

"The first text is Romans 8:29. It reads that God has predestined his people to be conformed to the image of his Son – that is to become like Jesus. We all know that when Adam fell he lost much, though not all, of the divine image in which he had been created. But God has restored it in Christ. Conformity to the image of God means to become like Jesus. Christlikeness is the eternal predestinating purpose of God. That's Romans 8:29.

"My second text is 2 Corinthians 3:18. Let me quote it. 'We all, with unveiled face beholding (or perhaps reflecting) the Lord, the glory of the Lord, we are being changed or we are being transformed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another.' For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.' So it is by the Spirit, by the indwelling Spirit himself, that we are being changed from glory to glory.

"It's a magnificent vision. Now in this second stage of becoming like Christ you will notice that the perspective has changed. It has changed from the past to the present; from God's eternal predestination to his present transformation of us by the Holy Spirit. It has changed from God's eternal purpose to make us like Christ to his historical work by his Spirit to transform us into the image of Jesus.

"That brings me to my third text, 1 John 3: 2. 'Beloved we are God's children now and it does not yet appear what we shall be but we know that when he appears we will be like him for we shall see him as he is. '

"The book, *The Imitation of Christ*. written by Thomas A. Kempis in the early fifteenth century became so popular that hundreds of thousands of editions and translations have been published. So that after the Bible it is probably the world's best seller. It's largely about imitating Christ, and its enormous popularity is an indication of the importance of this great theme or topic which is concerning us tonight. So let me return now to the third text, 1 John 3:2.

"Here we're told both what we don't know and what we do know. We don't know in any detail what we shall be in the last day. But we do know that we will be like Christ. There's really no need for us to know any more than this. We are content with the glorious truth that we will be with Christ, like Christ forever. Well are you with me so far?

"Here are three perspectives past, present and future and all of them are pointing in the same direction. There is God's eternal purpose, we have been predestined; there is God's historical purpose, we are being changed, transformed by the Holy Spirit; and there is God's final or eschatological purpose, we will be like him for we shall see him as he is. All three – the eternal, the historical and the final or eschatological – all three combine towards the same end of Christlikeness. This, I suggest, is the purpose of God for the people of God. So that's the local basis for becoming like Christ. It's the purpose of God for the people of God.

Five New Testament examples

"Now I want to move on secondly to illustrate this truth with a number of New Testament examples. But first I think it's important for us to make a general statement as the Apostle John does in 1 John 2:6. Here it is: 'He who says he abides in Christ ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.' In other words, if we claim to be a Christian we must be Christlike. So here is the first New Testament example.

"We are to be like Christ in his incarnation. Now some of you may immediately recoil with horror from such an idea. Surely you say to me the incarnation was an altogether unique event and cannot possibly be imitated in any way. My answer to that question is yes and no. Yes it was unique in the sense that the Son of God took our humanity to himself in Jesus of Nazareth once and for all and forever, never to be repeated. That is true. But no, there is another sense in which the incarnation was not unique but the amazing grace of God that is to be followed by all of us.

"So we say the incarnation in that sense was not unique but universal. We are all called to follow the example of his great humility in coming down from heaven to earth. I expect you're thinking of this in Philippians 2:5-8: 'Have this mind' Paul wrote – either which you have among yourselves or which was in Christ – 'who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God something to be grasped for his own selfish enjoyment. No, he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.' So we are to be like Christ in his incarnation, in the amazing self-humbling which lies behind the incarnation. I hope we've grasped that.

"Secondly, we are to be like Christ in his service. We move on now from his incarnation to his life of service, from his birth to his life. We move on from the beginning as it were to the end. So let me invite you to come with me to the upper room where Jesus spent his last evening with his disciples recorded in John 13. During supper you recall he took off his outer garments, tied a towel round him, poured water into a basin and washed his disciples' feet. When he finished he resumed his place and he said, If then I your Lord and teacher have washed your feet you ought to also wash one another's feet for I've given you an example. Notice the words: "I've given you an example that you should do as I have done to you." That's John 13:15.

"Now some Christians take Jesus' command literally and have a foot washing ceremony with the Lord's Supper, or once a month, or on Maundy Thursday, and they may be right to do it. But I think most of us also transpose Jesus' command culturally. That is just as Jesus performed what in his culture was the work of a slave, so we in our cultures must regard no task too menial or degrading to undertake for each other. We must be like Christ in his incarnation, like Christ in his service.

"Thirdly, we are to be like Christ in his love. I think particularly now of Ephesians 5:2. 'Walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.' Now please notice that in this wonderful text it is in two parts. The first part is walk in love. Walk in love is an injunction that all our behavior should be characterized by love. But the second part of the verse is that he gave himself for us, which is not a continuous thing but a clear reference to the Cross. So Paul is urging us to be like Christ in his death: to love with self-giving Calvary love.

Now, I wonder if in these three verses you have followed what is being developed. Paul is urging us to be like the Christ of the incarnation, to be like the Christ of the foot washing and to be like the Christ of the Cross. These three events in the life of Christ indicate clearly what Christlikeness means in practice. And in the middle of of this very chapter (Ephesians 5:25), Paul urges husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. We are to be like him in his incarnation, in his service, in his love.

"And now fourthly we are to be like Christ in his patient endurance. In this next example we consider the teaching not of Paul but of Peter. Every chapter of Peter's first letter contains an allusion to our suffering like Christ. For the background of the letter is the beginning of persecution. In 1Peter 2, Peter urges Christian slaves punished unjustly to bear it and not to repay evil for evil. For Peter goes on 'You and we have been called to this because Christ also suffered leaving us an example (There is that word again.) so that we may follow in his steps.' 1Peter 2:18. Now this call to Christlikeness in suffering unjustly may well become increasingly relevant as persecution increases in many cultures of the world today.

"My fifth and last New Testament example is that we are to be like Christ in his mission. Having looked at the teaching of Paul and Peter we come now to the teaching of Jesus recorded by John. In John 16:18 and in John 20:21 we have Jesus' prayer. In prayer Jesus said: 'As you Father have sent me into the world so I send them into the world.' That's us, and in his commissioning in John 17 he says: 'As the Father sent me into the world so I send you into the world.'

These words, friends, are immensely significant. This is not just the Johanine version of The Great Commission, it is also an instruction that their mission in the world is to resemble Christ's mission. In what respect? Well the key words in these texts are the words – sent into the world. As Christ had entered our world so we are to enter other people's worlds. It was eloquently explained by Arch Bishop Michael Ramsey some years ago who wrote this. 'We state and commend the faith only in so far as we go out and put ourselves with loving sympathy inside the doubts of the doubters, questions of the questioners, and the loneliness of those who have lost the way.' This entering into other people's worlds is exactly

Continued on p. 17

Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke

Return of the Jetta

My father viewed cars as "…a necessary evil – something to take you from Point A to Point B." Much as I respected my dad, I still believed he was overlooking the mystique, the excitement, the sheer thrill of car ownership. In my last year of high school I took the tip money I had saved from my restaurant job, all $750, and bought a '67 Rambler from the neighbor. Pa stood in our driveway eyeing my purchase with a mixture of amusement and perplexity. He shook his head and said, "Well, once you own a car you'll never have money. Don't say I didn't tell you." He was a wise man. Time and experience have proven that much.

The Rebel gave up the ghost the following summer, on a sweltering Friday afternoon in rush hour traffic. The next morning we went car shopping. I came home at noon with a '74 Vega and monthly payments of $83.90. Chevy had just introduced Vega the year before. They were small, fuel efficient and affordable. They also ranked right up there with the Edsel as an automotive disaster. Who knew?

1974 Vega

By the time that car was paid for, I was buying motor oil by the case and could literally see daylight through the rust holes in the frame around the windshield. In the meantime my father had passed away. I bought his '75 Nova (the only brand new car he had ever owned) from my mom, who didn't drive. I sold the Vega for a third of its original price and remember feeling guilty for taking the money.

A year later I met Jack – the man of my dreams in so many ways. Handsome, witty, plus he was trained in body work and auto mechanics *and* his father was the service manager at a local dealership. How could I not fall in love?

At the time Jack drove a '72 Challenger. Whenever he pulled into our driveway the teacups rattled in the china cabinet. On our first date I remarked that I thought a mechanic's car might run a little smoother. With a knowing grin he reached for the volume knob and said, "What's really important is that your stereo is loud enough to drown out the shakes and rattles."

Together we've owned a lot of vehicles. Some of them were pretty interesting. One or two were given to us for free, which is about what they were worth. Jack's skills with body work and painting have kept us rolling for comparatively little expense. He fixed most mechanical problems himself. When it was something really tough, his dad was always on the job for us. Normally we had some kind of pickup truck for the farm and a family car or minivan.

Over the years I've often thought about my father's sentiment toward cars – *a necessary evil*. He meant, of course, that it's hard to do without a vehicle for practical purposes, but they can cause all kinds of trouble. They're expensive, bad for the environment and can quickly become a personal obsession – a status symbol that never actually satisfies.

All of that is true. More than once I've looked across the road at our Mennonite neighbors and wondered if they don't have the right idea with their horse and buggy. Years ago, even if farmers had a car, they'd only venture to town once during the week and then on Sundays for church. When we were in the midst of our child-raising years I sometimes doubted if the convenience of two vehicles was really worth it. Too often our lives seemed focused on shuttling from one activity to the next.

By the time Stephanie and James were old enough to drive, Jack decided to use our Grand Caravan as a farm truck/ family van and find something more economical for the errands here and there. We traded in our gas guzzling GMC pickup for a '96 Jetta diesel. Windsor blue with tinted windows, it still had that new car smell. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. I hadn't been that excited about a car since the Vega. (Hopefully this would have a happier ending.)

The first night we had it I drove Jess to the Optimist oratory competition. She practiced her speech while I concentrated on what gear I was in. In time, all three of our children learned to drive stick in that car. Mostly they drove the minivan, affectionately dubbed "Woody" for its fake wooden side decals. But once in awhile for some special occasion, like the spring formal, they were permitted to borrow "Jetta One."

Grandpa had already owned a Jetta for some time. When James and Stephanie were seniors in high school we bought an old Jetta to run back and forth. After graduation James traded that Jetta for a newer gas model. Meanwhile, Grandma acquired a lovely white automatic Jetta. In her second year of college Stephanie bought a red Jetta. People began to wonder if we were raising chickens or Jettas on our farm. Jettas were bought, sold and passed along. Eventually Stephanie took over Jetta One.

It seemed there were plenty of Jettas to go around. When James and Willene got married two years ago, they borrowed a vintage Beetle for their wedding car, followed by a parade of family-owned Jettas. But somehow, one day I ended up Jetta-less. It happened when Jessica needed a car to get back and forth to work. We sold her the 2000 TDI. After all, we had motorbikes for the summer months and surely we could share the Dakota truck between the two of us.

Stephanie finished her studies last year and her time to buy a newer car had come. What to buy? What else? Another Jetta. I happily bought Jetta One back from her. The woman at the vehicle registration office puzzled over the ownership history. "According to this," she said, "This is the third time someone named VanderSlikke has owned this car." I smiled at her. "It's a long story."

Jetta

So, for the past year Jetta One and I have been reunited. James calls her a *twenty foot car* – meaning she still looks great from a distance of twenty feet or more. There's some rust, but mostly she shines. Jack has painted her twice already, and can't see spending time and effort on another makeover for the old girl. The interior is still perfect, the air conditioner will give you goose bumps and the engine doesn't burn a drop of oil. It's been liberating to drive all year and never fret about how many kilometers I was racking up. After 300,000 you just don't care.

A new era began last week. We became Jeep owners. Jack found an '04 Liberty for several thousand dollars less than a comparable VW would cost. I laughed when I first saw it. "That's not a Jetta." I said, "It's not even blue." However, it does have alloy wheels and a sunroof and I have to admit it's a whole lot of fun to drive.

Jetta One now belongs to Grandpa. He put new shocks and tires on her and will patch up the rust holes, and she'll probably go for another 100,000 k's. Not to worry – his red Jetta will be dismantled for parts and converted into an auxiliary engine to be used around the farm. This is recycling at its finest. Old diesels never die. David Suzuki would be proud.

When I look out the window most days I still see Jetta One on the yard. A necessary evil? Nah. What I see is ten years' worth of memories. Grandpa promised I could drive her anytime I want. But I'm happy with my Jeep. And who knows? Maybe someday I'll own another Jetta. Or a '67 Camaro. Anything but a Vega.

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Flowers & Thistles
Curt Gesch

All that grass

All over North America, in suburbs and rural areas, you can hear sweet phrases like this: "Elisabeth, if you don't get that lawn mowed by the time I'm home from shopping, you're grounded again, this time for *two* years!" (OK, so I exaggerate a little about the length of the threatened grounding: it was really only one year.)

Apartment dwellers have an advantage: no rooftop or balcony lawns to mow. But for those of us with lawns, well. . . . we're getting a little sick of taking care of them by August. Even those who have coddled their lawns – fertilising them, edging, top-dressing with sand or peat, assassinating dandelions and other malicious weeds, irrigating – even us *connoisseurs-de-lawn* are a little tired of mowing by August.

Lawns are quite the topic of discussion these days. I've heard Halifax doesn't allow pesticides on them. Nearly every major city has someone or another who is being charged or suing about "natural lawns" or the re-establishment of natural prairies instead of the traditional carpet of tended green.

There are extremes on the other side, too. Way, way back in the 1970s, a fellow truck driver told me how he solved the problem of all those leaves blowing into his backyard pool (it took up his entire small back yard): "I cut down all the trees on my yard, and paved the front yard, and then painted it green. Now I can swim and don't have to clean the pool so often or mow the lawn."

Then there is the single most logical choice: tear up the lawn and plant a "Victory Garden." Victory Gardens – gardens in place of front-yard grass – were a necessity of World War II, during which patriotic people planted potatoes and other vegetables "for the war effort." I was told that in the 1950's Edmontonians could always tell where the Ukrainians lived because the front yard was a potato patch. This was only until income rose and the garden got bounced for lawn and a flowerbed.

Still, vegetable gardening makes lots of sense, front yard or back. And they can look beautiful. I'm told that in the formal gardens of Versailles, the gardening plan involves vegetables like lettuce, cabbage, and bush beans as part of the mix of flowers and shrubs. (Presumably these plants also feed the gardeners or the President, now that the Sun King seems to have moved on.)

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My daughter, Elisabeth – she who was almost grounded for two years – came up with a time-saving, innovative way of reducing the labour of mowing our large back lawn. When I came home from grocery shopping I noticed that the lawn was mowed. . . partly. There were lines of unmowed grass which spelled, "MOM." More interesting to mow, too. And Mom wasn't about to support the threatened grounding after seeing it.

Another daughter, another year. Becca decided that we should have our own crop circle. So she mowed a big circle in the backyard. Saving gas, saving time, and saving effort. (To say nothing of the pleasure we had when visitors would look and say, hesitantly, "Did you *mow* it that way?. . . it isn't a – what-you-call-it? – a *crop circle?"*)

So here is a plan you can implement immediately. A plan that will save you time, reduce air pollution, challenge your creativity, maybe even build relationships: mow a message in your lawn. I have way too much lawn, so I made two designs.

The first is a large heart. My wife, Betsey, is pleased with it. Friends look at me and say, "Um, . . . I didn't know you were so romantic." .

Here's another design. It looks maybe like a meditation maze, but that's giving me too much spiritual savvy. It's actually a fox-n-goose route for visiting children to play on. There are a number of games one can invent using this design, which is not patent-protected. My wife, Betsey, likes to walk slowly on the paths, so maybe the meditation idea is not too far-fetched. .

*****

And what about "giving a garden." I got the idea from my neighbour, John Wisselink, who – with his children – enclosed a long, narrow bed at the base of a retaining wall, filled it with perfect topsoil, and presented it to his wife for Mother's Day.

Monkey see; monkey do. I was getting sick of mowing my way-too-large mid-back-yard, so I decided to make a flower bed for *my* wife for Mother's Day, using up some lawn at the same time. Although it may not be apparent at first glance, the garden is in the shape of a patch-work quilt because Betsey is a great original-design.

Her garden has sections with containers made out of old boards, potted flowers, in-the-ground onions, radishes, lettuce, broccoli, and flowers. I separated the sections with strips from old cedar siding so as to look more quiltish. (I was quite proud of the sign, "Betsey & Me", but she thinks it looks like our grave marker.)

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A final good idea for eliminating lawn is this: "grow more grass." The type of grass I'm talking about is grain. In my case it is barley, but you may prefer wheat, oats, or some other grain. You can buy books to tell you how to grow grain in the backyard: Gene Lodgsdon's *Small Scale Grain Growing* is a good one. But you do not need much savvy at all.

Simply till or spade the ground, as little 6' X 8' if you like, and plant the grain in rows. If you are worried about "how it looks," remember that with grain, you can grow it the Chinese way: in rows that you weed and hoe by hand. (No sprayers or combines will be used.) You patch will look as neat and geometrical as you want it to look.

When the grain gets ripe, you have a real treat: you can harvest it by hand. Use a hedge clippers, or scissors, a sickle, whatever you have that is not powered. Tie into bundles using discarded string or the straw itself. Make stooks. Bring into the barn (I like to store whole bundles to feed the chickens in the winter – it gives them something to do). Or thresh and winnow immediately. A big window fan works well to blow the chaff away. Bring your grandchildren to help, or a Sunday school class, or the neighbour kids. Read Psalm 1 together. Grind the grain in your blender and make flour, then bread, or pancakes, or barley cakes, or parched grain (like popcorn, sort of).

I've always wondered why suburban churches and big industries often have such large lawn areas. Why not grow grain? I think that the extensive chunk of lawn between Grand Rapids' Prince Conference

Grass

Centre and the nearby nature preserve should be turned into a grain field: wheat, oats, millet or hard corn. Or a field of sweet corn for the residents to eat. Or an organic orchard. I can imagine any number of conference speakers who would love to give an outdoor lecture about fields being white unto harvest, or the law of gleaning, or a missionary helping people grind millet or eat mealie-pap.

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Most of us do more than enough mowing.

A smooth green lawn is beautiful. Robins love it and so do people.

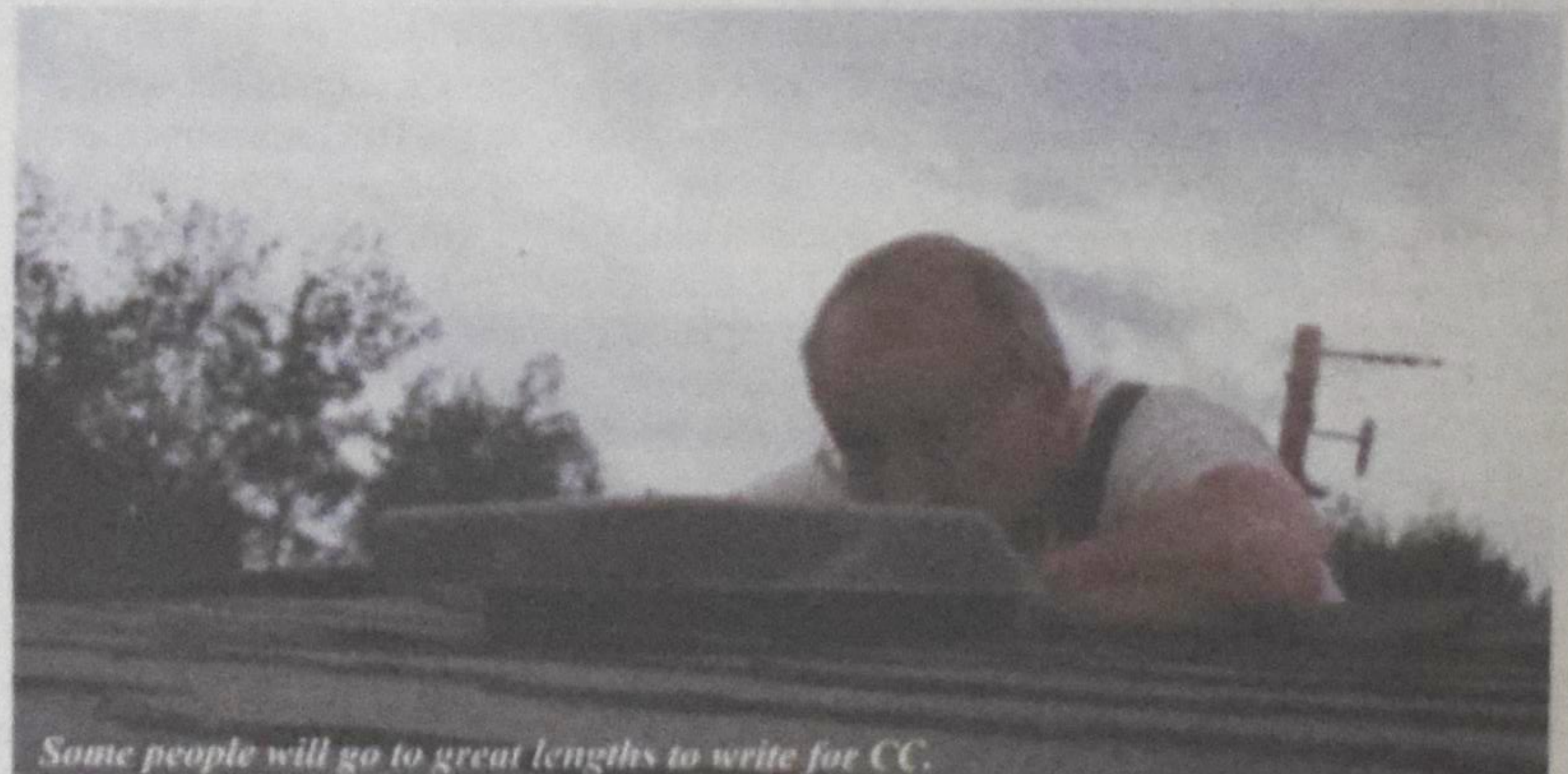
Golf courses have their place (although there are grassless golf courses, too.)

So do playing fields.

Grass is great, but so is leisure time.

Less lawn may sometimes lead to meditation, or stimulate creativity, help teach Bible lessons, feed our imaginations or our stomachs.

"Less lawn" for our family resulted in more appreciation for Liz, and fewer threats.



Some people will go to great lengths to write for CC. Curt Gesch climbed on his roof to take pictures

Curt Gesch is a retired teacher who lives on a farm which has – willows, moose and hay (grass) as the main crops.

Ecclesiastes

Where do we go in the end?

Then man goes to his eternal home
and mourners go about the streets.
Ecclesiastes 12:5b

A. A. van Ruler

This verse is a very clear statement about humankind. Our existence is a "being toward death" (Heidegger). Twentieth century European philosophy was obsessed with this vision, but the poets were way ahead of the philosophers. The poets of every age have felt the nearness of death and given expression to their thoughts and feelings in their poetry. Actually all through its long history humankind has wrestled with the mystery of death.

Nowadays, however, we may be trying to push death out of our lives and out of the world of our imagination. This is especially true in our large cities. We become wholly absorbed in our jobs, our entertainment, and pleasures, dismissing thoughts of death as lugubrious brooding. Contemporary preachers hardly dare to remind their people about death – it's not a way to win their attention.

Out in the country this may be different. In small towns, when someone dies the news quickly spreads, so everyone has a deeper awareness of living out of the end. But I fear things are changing there as well. There too the media are saturating the people with amusement.

There is something inhuman about banishing the thought of death completely out of our lives. It's to embrace the life of plants and animals. They are alive but they have no awareness that life will one day come to an end. The knowledge of death is part of the nobility of humanity; it is an essential moment in his self-consciousness. So when a minister of the Word periodically reminds the congregation of death, he is not being grim or lugubrious. He is thereby waking them up to the full stature of their humanity. Only those who permit themselves to admit and to live with the thought of death fully come into their humanity.

Allegory of death *by Juan de Valdes Leal*

This thought marks the whole of human life. We are on our way to our eternal home. We are traveling, moving, walking. Human beings are dynamic creatures. We might even say that we are progressive, always striving ahead, going forward. We are not conservative by nature, clinging to the old, to our birth. The umbilical cord has been cut and now we find ourselves amidst continual change. The Preacher has a sharp eye for all this dynamism, movement, change, progress, and he says that man is on his way: he is going somewhere – namely to his eternal home.

There is also such a thing as a temporal home. It is the life that has been granted him here for a time. But it is a home. You can live in it. You may even feel comfortable and at home in it. Don't we all cling desperately to life? We cling to it as we did to our parental home. But it is only temporary, says the Preacher. Life is a temporary house and we are on the way to an eternal home. It's a home that we can occupy forever.

But what does the Preacher have in mind when he speaks of our "eternal home"? Is he thinking of heaven, of the hereafter and of eternal life? Is this the eternal destination of humankind? Is this his main point? Over against this "eternal Home' does he see this temporal life as the run-up, preparation, practice field, or springboard for the life to come?

Or must we think of this eternal home in more down-to-earth terms? Perhaps the Preacher is thinking of the grave, the cemetery, the realm of the dead. If this is what he has in mind, it is strange that he calls it an eternal "home". Wouldn't other terms serve better? It would be much more realistic, for example, to speak of the grave as a waste pit, for it dissolves us into dust and ashes till there's nothing left of us. A much milder way of putting it in the Old testament is to say that when someone dies he is gathered to his forefathers.

So, what is it: the grave or heaven? The experts line up on either side with vehement arguments. Conservative exegetes insist that the Preacher is thinking of heaven and that he knows of the immortality of the soul. More modern exegetes smile at this bias and charge their old-fashioned colleagues with being unscientific.

Personally, I think the entire debate is somewhat trivial. I myself suspect that the Preacher is simply thinking of the grave. But is the grave really something ordinary? Is the Preacher so superficial in his thinking that he thinks the grave is something ordinary? Isn't it a devastating fact, for him too, that in the end we must be laid in the grave? Look at this person: he was alive, he worked, he loved, he was self-conscious, he called himself "I", he was a person – and now he is being laid in the grave. Isn't that horrifying?

The mourners go about the streets. This is the reaction of those who remember that their neighbor has been laid in the grave – they mourn.

Mourning (rouw) is different from penitence (berouw). We are penitent when we come to the horrifying realization that we have done wrong. There is something irrevocable and irreparable about such deeds. Nevertheless, there is a certain similarity between mourning and penitence. My neighbor is gone and he will never return. He has gone to his eternal home. This is how the ancients thought of it.

The modern exegetes shouldn't lose sight of this. Why does the Preacher speak of his "eternal home instead of simply saying death is the end; beyond it there is nothing. I suspect it's because he feels that nevertheless something did exist. Life is brimming with reality and this will never be completely undone. The dead are not like the unborn. So to die is for life to be eternally stored away, hidden, put in safekeeping.

The Preacher may first of all be thinking of the grave, which he knows to be the waste pit, but he also calls it our eternal home. He probably also had in mind being gathered unto ones forefathers and the realm of the dead. But in no way would he be satisfied with the superficial modern notion that death is death and that's all there is to it. Someone who has lived to the full and who thinks to the full and who is fully aware of reality, continues to ask questions when faced with death. Even if it is only to grope the landscape of the world to come like the blind man feels his way along the walls. At any rate, the only reasonable thing to do is to keep feeling ones way. Where are our dead and in what state? Where and what will I be after my death?

These questions regarding the individual must also be asked about humanity in the large. Humankind is also dynamic and in movement. It, too, is subject to permanent change. It is going somewhere. It has a history.

But where is humankind going? Does it have a destination? Or is it only caught in a circle? Do the roads leading from the oasis run dead in the desert? Do human culture and human history sink into nothingness? Or must we say, No, humankind is also going to its eternal home; history has meaning – it is headed toward the kingdom of God?

And in this movement is the individual nothing more than manure for the fields for this future humanity? Or perhaps everything adds up. Then the eschaton of history also embraces the salvation of the individual. The church in its dogma answers these questions with the confession: I believe in the resurrection of the body.

Life story

The true-to-life account of the discovery and the flowering of a not-so-famous organist (Part II)

Ray Hulstein

Moving up in New Zealand

There were many Dutch Immigrants in Dunedin, New Zealand, and many more to arrive, so the Presbyterian Church invited a Dutch Pastor from the Dutch Reformed Church in Holland to come and work among the immigrants. This Pastor, Tom Everts and his wife Ann, became good friends of ours. At one time I had the opportunity to travel with him for a week all through the Province of Otago to visit those Dutch immigrants who lived too far away to attend church. Rev. Everts also started a monthly Dutch service, held at the St. Kilda Presbyterian Church. Since I had received my "organist baptism" at the Knox Presbyterian Church, I was invited to play for the monthly Dutch services.

Another church, another organ, new experiences and more learning opportunities. I remained connected with the Dutch services in Dunedin until a great job offer came my way, and Mies and I moved to Auckland, New Zealand on December 14, 1959.

I became an employee of Kelvin Manufacturing and subsequently with Kelvin Industries at Queen Street, Onehunga, Auckland. It was an importing company that dealt with many countries all over the world, including Holland, and it imported many goods from Honig's of Zaandam. The job afforded me an opportunity to travel a lot and visit many grocery chains to promote Honig's products to the New Zealand stores.

In Auckland, too, the Presbyterian Church had "imported" a Dutch Pastor from the Dutch Reformed Church. And I soon made contact with Pastor Bert Denee and his wife Mia. In Auckland, too, a Dutch worship service was introduced once a month. And, wouldn't you know it? There was a shortage of organists, so when Rev. Denee heard that Ray Hulstein could play the Pipe organ, I heard the same words here as in Dunedin: "You are it." Soon I was playing the organ in one of Auckland's oldest and most beautiful churches, the Khyber Pass Presbyterian Church. Although the organ was not as large as the Church in Dunedin, it still took me awhile to start feeling comfortable with it, but after leading the singing a few times in the worship services I felt at home on that bench.

Joop and Ans Schmit were one of the many couples we soon became friends with in Auckland. Joop also had a great musical hobby: he played the trumpet, and, boy, was he ever good at it. What a joy it was for us to play the organ and trumpet together in that great Church! I don't think either of us will ever forget the Easter Service of 1958. We practiced very hard for this service, for we were told that this Easter Service would be recorded and broadcast in Holland via the NCRV, the Netherlands Christian Radio Company.

Many years later on one of our regular visits to Holland, we met some old friends who told us: "Yes, we heard that broadcast and you guys did alright!"

I remember Joop's comments after the service: "What do you know. Not bad for two amateurs."

Leaving New Zealand for Canada

In 1954 my parents, brother and nine sisters had immigrated to Vancouver, Canada. Although we were well settled in Auckland and were surrounded by many friends; nevertheless, in 1959 we made the very difficult decision to leave New Zealand and join my family in Canada. My father was ill and my family asked us repeatedly to join them there. We left Auckland on December 14, 1959 and sailed for 14 days on the P and O liner, the Arcadia, sailing via Fiji and Hawaii to Vancouver.

A totally new life, for us at first it was a hard life with many moments of home sickness for New Zealand, which had really become our home. But the Lord accompanied us here as he had in New Zealand. And we have many reasons to be thankful.

After arriving in Vancouver, we again started to look for a church, for although my family belonged to the First Vancouver Christian Reformed Church, we still thought of ourselves as Presbyterians, so we shopped around a bit. In the end, however, we also decided to become members of the Christian Reformed Church.

This church already had two organists, Mr. Sellers and Mr. Dick Vos. It had a rather small but nice sounding organ that it had bought from a local radio station, CJOR. It was a single unit, with the pipes built on top of the organ works and bench. Even before we joined First Vancouver CRC, the congregation had been well-informed that Mother Hulstein's son, Ray, who had recently arrived from New Zealand was an organist. And Mother Hulstein said that he was good.

She could vouch for that because she had a 12-inch wax record on which his playing was recorded.

My call to "the bench" came soon, due to the sudden death of Mr. Sellers from a serious heart attack. Later on we also had Dick Van Randen as an organist, and together with Dick Vos, the three of us really got along well. One night the three of us went to the Queen Elizabeth Theater for a concert by the world famous and our favorite organist, Virgil Fox.

After seeing this man play, watching his hand and feet fly all over the organ, as we were leaving the theater, Dick Vos remarked, "Well, fellow organists, are we going to continue on or are we going to quit?"

Often we three would get together after church with our families. We would sit down and reminisce and laughed a lot about some of the bad moments while on the bench. Funny things, embarrassing as well awkward, happen while you're at the organ.

Once, having been asked to play for a wedding, I met with the future bride and groom to discuss the music, which wedding march they preferred, and how many bridesmaids would precede the bride. The last is a very important question for the organist, for he will start the bride's entrance music when the last attendant arrives at the front of the church. For this wedding, I was told, there would be just one bridesmaid and one flower girl. Well, that makes two.

So while playing some soft music as I watched the aisle through the mirror, I saw the flower girl enter and walk slowly to the front of the church. And then the bridesmaid appeared in my little mirror, and the moment she reached the front, I pulled some nice and loud stops and started playing "Here Comes The Bride".

Not quite at the end of the first bar I glanced in my mirror again and could not believe my eyes. The bride whom I had known for quite some time and had spoken to that same week had suddenly grown very large and rather old looking. Realizing that something was not right, I quickly pushed back most of the stops and resumed the soft music. When this unknown person had reached the front, I stared into the mirror, expecting more surprises. But I saw someone waiting who looked like the girl I knew, and once again I pulled out all the stops and launched into "Here comes the Bride" again. This time, fortunately, it was for the right person.

Later during the reception I asked the couple if there had been a misunderstanding as I believed that two persons were supposed to enter before the Bride.

"O, we're so sorry," said the bride. "My auntie suddenly turned up for the wedding and we asked her to be the matron of honor. But we forgot to tell you."

"Auntie" was well over 50, single and never been married. Playing "Here comes the Bride" for Auntie might have given her a thrill, but I was a bit shaky during the rest of the wedding.

And than there was the other wedding.... The bride and groom and attendants were nicely lined up at the front of the church, with large silver stands with beautiful flowers behind the pastor. The Pastor (I won't divulge his name) launches into a long, long sermon with the whole wedding party standing in front of him. At last the best man, his body locked at attention, toppled face forward into the flowers, knocking the stand and flowers to the floor, out cold among the mess. He must have had enough of the sermon, but he was revived and survived the wedding.

Richmond, B.C. and Hawaii

In May 1968, having moved to Richmond and enrolled our son Robert at the Richmond Christian School, we transferred our membership to the Richmond Christian Reformed Church. We were hardly settled in when I received a call to "the bench" to join Gerda Bosma as one of the church's organists. However, this time it was not a pipe organ but a two-manual electronic Allan organ with a large speaker hung overhead on the wall behind me. I must admit that for an electronic organ it sounded quite nice and had some very fine stops, but with a large congregation you had to be careful not to pull out too many stops and "burp" the speaker.

The organist, however, was located in the back of the church. The only face I could see from the organ bench belonged to the Pastor, although even he was far away, and for the rest, rows and rows of backs belonging to the congregation. I love to lead in singing, but I greatly prefer facing the congregation. When their voices are coming towards you, you can much better gauge their response as you lead the singing. When the hymn is like a prayer and you have turned down the volume, you want them to respond. And at other times when the words of a hymn speak of God's greatness and majesty, as when you sing "How great Thou art" then I not only want to hear the voices but I love to see the expressions on their faces as they sing full out. I always missed that while being stuck in the back of the church.

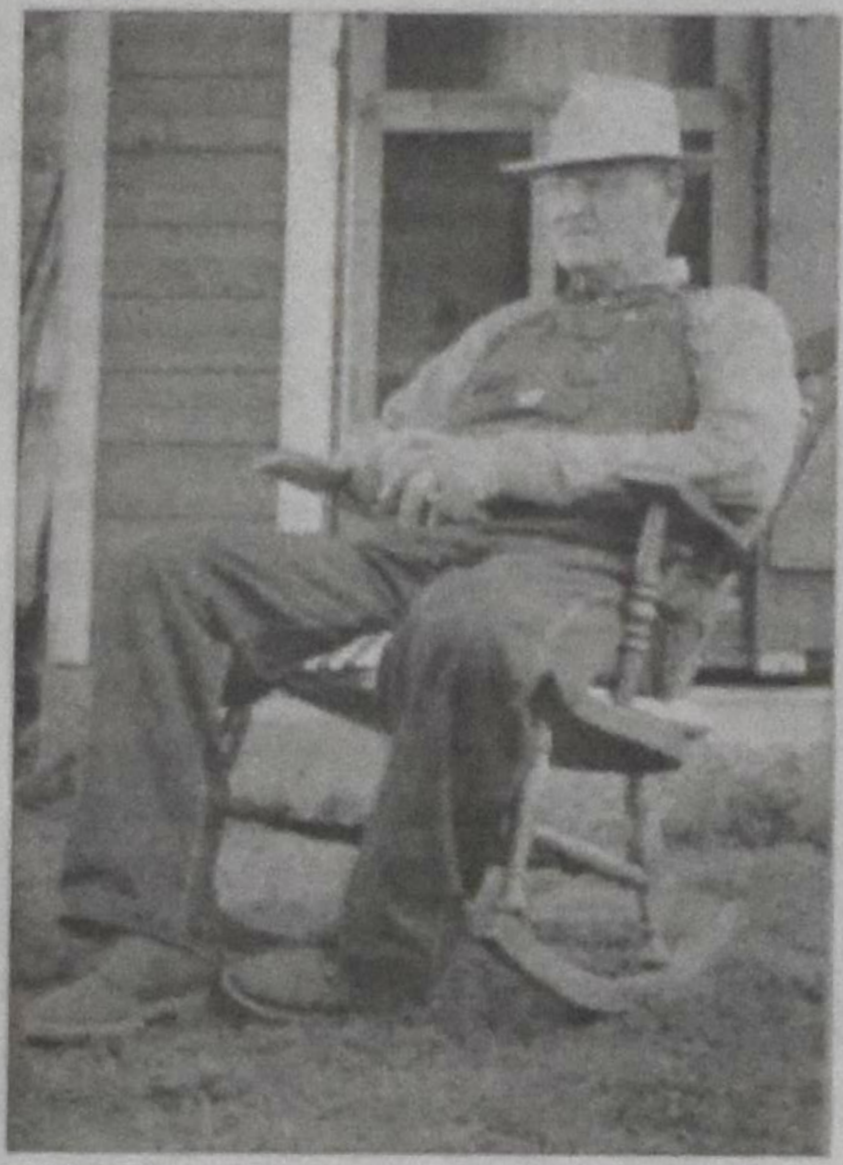
While we lived in Richmond, we were fortunate enough to have vacations in the Hawaiian Islands. In one our trips to Oahu, while we were strolling through the old part of Honolulu, we came across the beautiful Kawaiahao Church at Punch Bowl Street. The church was built by the early missionaries and opened in 1842 by Hiram

Continued on p. 16

Country

M. van der Galien — Country Living

Why old-timers wore winter garb in the summer
Did it make sense?



When I was a boy I was often puzzled why most of the older farmers in my neighbourhood wore autumn and winter type clothing during the hot summer months.

They wore long wool underwear, long sleeve dark shirts and denim or dungaree bib overalls. The straw hat was the only covering that made any sense to me.

Threshing grain wasn't an easy job in the 1950's and '60's. Sheaves of grain had to be stooked by hand. When they were dry enough to thresh, they were forked onto a wagon where they were neatly placed, making it a tall and solid load. On threshing day, when the neighbours came together, the sheaves were forked into the jaws of the threshing mill. Men carried sacks of grain up the stairs in the granary. There were no augers when I grew up.

It was quite an experience for a boy of nine or ten to witness neighbours coming together to thresh grain. After a big dinner the men would sit outside under a tree in the shade. Women in those days cooked the meal on a wood-burning cook stove – usually in the summer kitchen or in the cookhouse, as some called it. They, too, didn't wear skimpy clothing. And they always wore an apron.

It was years later that I found out why the men wore the winter garb in the summertime.

What keeps the cold out also keeps the heat out, was their philosophy.

You know, like a thermos bottle. It's insulated to keep the liquids whatever you want – hot or cold. And that was the idea for keeping their bodies cool in the summer. Insulating it against the heat.

The long wool underwear would absorb the perspiration and make the body feel cool … uh, something like that.

And you'd seldom see working-class men wearing a belt to keep up their trousers. Nearly everyone wore suspenders.

I thought my father looked pretty cool compared to the old-time farmers in those days. I never saw him in suspenders. He wore a belt. And he always wore light-coloured short-sleeve shirts and light green work pants. He wore short cotton underwear in the summer and "long johns" in the winter. And instead of wearing hot stuffy black boots, he worked in wooden shoes (klompen) around the farm. And always in the dairy barn, even in winter.

My father never wore coveralls. He didn't like them. He wore a jacket. I wore coveralls.

Max, my cottage neighbour, and I were discussing "old-timers" and some of their habits, which we frown on today. Max is in his mid-70's. He grew up in British Columbia. He says he never saw his father, who died at age 95, wear summer clothing.

They had a small farm near Prince George; the father worked in the lumber camps and lumberyards. Max said his dad wore long johns all the time right up until he died.

Max chuckled recalling after his dad died the family cleaned up the house and they found 20 pair of long johns. There were no short ones. Not even one!

What keeps the cold out also kept the heat out, was their theory, he said.

It was probably in the late 1960's, when the generation of "old-timers" passed away, that the habit of wearing winter garb in the summer passed on too.

But not completely. There are still people today, especially in some rural areas, who only wear dark-coloured clothing no matter how hot it is. Their bodies, except for their face and hands, are as white as the day they were born.

And I know people who wear long johns year round. I've seen people wear wooly underwear tops buttoned right up to their neck in hot, humid weather. Why?

I wear neat-looking short pants on the farm all summer. A milker's apron hanging in the workshop is put on if I'm greasing machinery or doing some repairs.

My theory of staying cool in the summer differs from the old-timers and those who think wearing shorts isn't for working men – something about the legs getting scratched.

Some people are so stiff!

Maynard van der Galien farms in the Ottawa Valley, at Renfrew, Ontario.

The true-to-life account

... *continued from p.15*

Bingham with over 14000 coral blocks taken from the reefs of Honolulu.

As we entered the church, we heard beautiful voices coming from the balcony, and behind the choir was a huge big pipe organ. As the choir members were leaving, I found the stairway winding up to the balcony. The organist was just closing the organ console, but when he saw me, he waved me on to come forward and invited me to have a look at large keyboard. He asked me, "Do you play?" and I told him that I was an organist in Richmond. He than asked me were I was staying in Hawaii. When I told him, he said, "I am sorry, but I have to leave now and have to close up, but if you would like to try out the organ, why don't you meet me here tomorrow morning. Take the No. 8 bus from Waikiki and meet me here just after 8.30 a.m. and I will open the organ for you, give you some info and off you go.

"When you are finished, leave the key at the office. And if you want to play again later, get the key from the office. I will put your name in the "Allowed Book".

You bet I was there in the morning, arriving on the No. 8 bus right on time. After the organist showed me the workings of this magnificent instrument, he left me with: "See you later and have fun."

And fun I had. I played for more than two hours. I also found out that the rows of trumpets sticking out of the wall way behind me at the other end of the church were no dummies but real state trumpets! What a sound and what a thrill to play this great instrument at the church known as the Westminster Abby of Honolulu. I did return for another day before we had to go back to Richmond and our electronic Allen Organ.

The following year, we returned to Oahu for another holiday. This time I took with me a copy of one of the songs in our Hymn Book, No. 518, known to us as "The Creedal Song," beginning, "In God the Father I believe." The tune and the words were written by Frank de Vries, a teacher in our Vancouver Christian School and in Smithers some years ago. Upon meeting the organist at the Kawaiahao Church once again, I presented him with a copy of the Creedal Song, and he played the music on the organ. I wish that Frank could have heard it! Impressed with the words and the melody, the organist decided that the choir should practice this hymn at their regular Thursday evening practice to perform it on the following Sunday.

But our flight back to Richmond was on Saturday evening, and we missed this great opportunity to hear Frank de Vries's song performed in this church and with this great choir and organ.

Many different stops; many different talents

Mr. Hulstein is a great natural storyteller, but we've had to cut out a few of his episodes for lack of space. He tells of the construction of a pipe organ in the Richmond church and lastly of his retirement. At his retirement, he was given a plaque by the congregation thanking him – and God – for his many years of service. Then he adds some reflections on his career.

This plaque means a lot to me for several reasons. The appreciation as expressed by the congregation of Richmond for one. But for me personally it means even more than that. It answers a question that I have asked myself many times: "Lord, why have you in your Wisdom given some organists, like Gerrit Janz, Zwart, Power Briggs, Feike Asma, and Virgil Fox, talents of a hundred fold and me only one, or maybe five- fold?"

It would have been so great had I been able to play like them! It would have been so great to tour the world and give concerts in famous churches!

But one day when I reread the inscription on this plaque, I found the answer. There is a beautiful parable in the Bible about the talents given to each one of us. Some a hundred, some fifty, some only five. The question posed is: "What are you doing with the talent given to you?"

As an organist I always asked for the Sunday hymns a few days before the service. I always wanted to know the text that was being preached on and the name or caption of the sermon. I always wanted to read over all the verses of a hymn to decide the volume to lead the singing.

And something I always found very important is the moment when the church is quiet during the time the offering is being taken. This was why it was so important for me as an organist to know the text being preached and the title of the sermon – so that at that time I did not give a performance but a message and a link to the sermon.

And many times after the service members of our congregation expressed appreciation, saying they felt blessed by the music being played during the offering. "You and the Pastor must get together before the service," I recall someone saying, "because so often your offertory complements the sermon." Such comments and the words on the plaque "Your music was an inspiration and a blessing to us" have stopped me from asking, "Why did You give me such a small talent compared to others?"

Today, looking back over all those years of playing the organ, in my own small way having been able to play to his glory and to leave a message and bless some one with the music of the organ, I can truly say now: "Thank You, Lord, for having given me the talent, the capability and the enjoyment of making the organ sing to your glory and to your honor."

Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King
The triumphs of His grace.
My gracious Master and My God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad
The honor of Your Name.

Ray Hulstein
www.hulstein.org

Purpose . . . continued from p.11

what we mean by incarnational evangelism. All authentic mission is incarnational mission. We are to be like Christ in his mission.

"Here then are the five main ways in which we are to be Christ like. We are to be Christ like in his incarnation, in his service, in his love, in his endurance, and in his mission.

Three practical consequences

"So we've considered the Biblical basis of Christ likeness and we've considered five examples. And very briefly I want to give you three practical consequences.

"First, Christlikeness and the mystery of suffering. Now of course suffering is a huge subject in itself and there are many ways in which Christians try to understand it. But one way stands out and that is that suffering is part of God's process of making us like Christ. Whether we suffer from a disappointment or a frustration or some other painful tragedy, we need to try to see this in the light of Romans 8:28 and 29. According to Romans 8:28 God is always working for the good of his people and according to Romans 8:29 this good purpose is to make us like Christ.

"Secondly, there is Christlikeness in the challenge of evangelism. Why is it you must have asked as I have that in many situations our evangelistic efforts are often fraught with failure. Well several reasons may be given and I do not want to oversimplify. But one main reason is that we don't look like the Christ we are proclaiming. John Poulton has written about this in a deceptive little book entitled *A Today Sort of Evangelism*. I think you will agree with me that it is well-worded. 'The most effective preaching comes from those who embody the things they are saying. They are their message. Christians need to look like what they're talking about. It is people who communicate primarily not words or ideas. Authenticity gets across in deep down inside people. What communicates now is basically personal authenticity. That is Christlikeness.'

"So let me give you another example: There was a Hindu professor in India who once identified one of his students as a Christian and who turned and said to him if you Christians lived like Jesus Christ, India would be at your feet tomorrow. I think India would be at their feet today if we Christians lived like Christ. There's another example from the Islamic world from a former Arab Muslim. He has said, 'If all Christians were Christians – that is Christlike – there would be no more Islam today.'

"That brings me to my third and last point – that is Christlikeness and the indwelling of the Spirit. I've spoken much tonight about Christlikeness but you are asking me is it attainable? My answer is that in our own strength it is clearly not attainable. But God has given us his Holy Spirit to dwell within us and to change us from within. William Temple the Archbshop in the nineteen-forties used to illustrate this point from Shakespeare. This is what he said. 'It's no good giving me a play like Hamlet or King Lear and telling me to write a play like that. Shakespeare could do it, I can't. And it is no good showing me a life like the life of Jesus and telling me to live a life like that. Jesus could do it, I can't.' But, he went on, 'If the genius of Shakespeare could come and live in me then I could write plays like this. And if the Spirit of Jesus could come into me then I could live a life like his.'

"So I conclude with a brief summary of what we've tried to say to one another to see whether you can remember it.

"Here is a simple summary. One: God's purpose is to make us like Christ. Two: God's way to make us like Christ is to fill us with his Spirit. In other words it's a Trinitarian conclusion concerning the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."

You can listen to this sermon online by going to www.langhampartnership.org/lpuki
You can find out more about the Langham Partnership ministry at www.langhampartnership.org/lpuki

Michael Ireland, an international British freelance journalist, is the Chief Correspondent for ASSIST News Service of Lake Forest, California. Robin Frost transcribed Dr. Stott's final public sermon.

Getting Unstuck

Arlene Van Hove

Appreciating the simplicity of silence

My mother is ninety-three now, an age she never expected nor wished to achieve.
Reeve Lindbergh author of No More Words

I can identify with Reeve Lindbergh's words. My mother is eighty-eight and she also never expected to live this long. She has outlived most of her siblings except her younger brother who is eighty-four and determined to live to "at least ninety!" My mother marvels at her own tenacity for hanging in there. Some time ago, when I wanted to take her to the doctor for a specific concern, she jokingly told me she had to die of something.

Reeve's mother, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, author of *A Gift from the Sea* and the wife of the famous aviator Charles Lindbergh, was fortunate to be able to live out her years in her own cottage on her daughter's farm in Vermont. Anne had previously suffered several strokes and needed looking after. And so she received around the clock care in her last declining years in her familiar cottage according to the popular Circle of Care model developed in the U.S. in terms of elder care. Reeve felt fortunate to have her mother close by and she visited her daily.

My mother is equally fortunate at present to be able to stay in her independent living suite of the retirement complex she moved into six years ago. She also receives around the clock care from two daughters while the remaining family members regularly pitch in to keep the Circle of Care going. One daughter lives with our mother three weeks of each month and another daughter one week of each month. This way she also continues to live in familiar surroundings in a routine that has nourished her for many years.

In the preface to her book *No More Words*, Reeve writes that while she is fortunate to have her mother close by, she does not know what to "do with her sometimes." But most of all, she writes, "It is the silence" that is hard for her. She has found, in her visits with her mother, "It isn't a matter of not being able to talk to her. I can talk, but she doesn't answer…." And so there is an uncomfortable silence.

My mother has always been a woman of few words and she continues to be so as she is aging. She sometimes laments that she is not a "talker." I tell her she is a good listener. I also tell her this noisy world needs more listeners than talkers and that by listening she is meeting a great social need. For people who love to talk, visiting my mom is pure joy. She listens patiently to everyone who is interested in sharing the latest happenings in their lives.

At the same time, anyone who does not like silence may be uncomfortable during their visit. Silence can feel threatening. We do not know what to *do* with that great empty space of nothingness that seems to exist between our self and the other. And so some of us rattle on and on about anything so we do not have to face our own uneasiness.

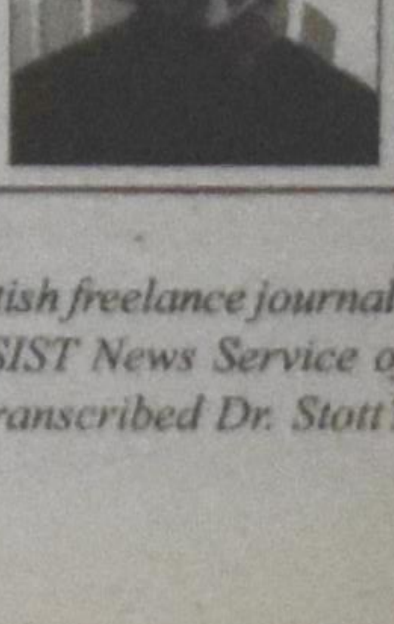
For myself, I enjoy talking as much as anyone and therefore appreciate my mother's listening ear. But as she is aging, I specifically treasure the companionable silence we now share. Not much needs to be said that has not been said before. And so, we sit and have coffee, lunch, tea, or sometimes dinner. During these times we may chat about the weather, the latest happening around

her retirement community, the flowers she received from various children, or the visits she had from family and friends. In other words, we talk about her every day life. But mostly, we enjoy the soothing silence that comes with appreciating the simplicity of the moment.

She used to wonder why she was living this long. I suggested it could be to show us how to age gracefully. In response, she would simply smile. This year it has been twenty years since she lost the love of her life. Yet, she carried on with courage and dignity in spite intense feelings of loneliness. A few years later she lost sight in one eye. And again, she carried on with courage and dignity. Over the years she lost most of her siblings in Holland and eventually her one sibling in Canada as well as several friends, and still she carried on.

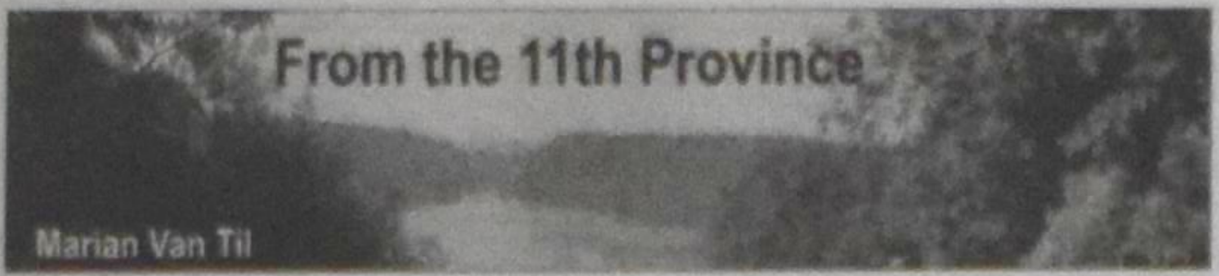
During all that time she also struggled with the aches and pains of an aging body. In the earlier years of her widowhood we used to sprint around the sea wall at Stanley Park on Fridays. Eventually, we went for shorter walks in White Rock or Crescent Beach. The last few years have kept us closer to a local park and our walking has been slower and slower. Lately, however, she has to choose between sitting in a wheel-chair or not going to the park at all, a hard choice when the immigrant motto is "do not give up." Unfortunately, there is often a fine line between "not giving up" and "accepting the stage of one's life." It takes emotional strength to do either.

And so, in the evening of my mother's life I want her to know she is indeed aging gracefully which takes heaps and heaps (as her great-grandchild – Courtney would say) of courage and determination. I also want her to know I appreciate the soothing quietness of her home not only because it is a reflection of who she is but also because it continues to give me a place of peace and quiet in our fast paced world. But most of all I concur with Mitch Albom when he wrote in his book *Tuesdays with Morrie*, that he found himself, surprisingly, to be a better person when he was with Morrie. And so it is with me – I am indeed a better person when I am in the company of my graceful and aging mother.



Arlene Van Hove is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC. She can be reached at avanhove@shaw.ca

Reflections



Musings on the Book of Revelation and Harry Potter

[WARNING: this column contains a spoiler re the ending of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.]

I began rereading the book of Revelation not long ago. In previous readings I've found it an exhilarating book. In vivid pictures and symbols it paints a glorious picture of the Lamb on his throne, of the consummation of Christ's Kingdom, the final conquering of death and our reign with him on the New Earth.

At the same time, there's much in Revelation that is difficult to comprehend. Some of it is mindboggling. And its interpreters over the years – pastors and book writers and television preachers – haven't always done us a service in how they approach this last, perplexing book of the Bible. They have left much confusion in their wake.

I said that in previous readings I've found Revelation exhilarating, as the Word of God always is when well understood. (*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.... The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul.*) This time, however, I got bogged down. Oh, the first three chapters are not hard to grasp. Christ's admonitions and encouragement to the seven churches of Asia Minor are straightforward, and easily applicable to ourselves and our churches. Christ's words in those seven "letters" are not entirely comfortable for us; but neither are his words in the Gospels, and correcting words never are. Yet there's something both particularly humbling and awe-inducing in the fact that Christ, through John, speaks these words directly to us his Church.

'Holy, holy, holy' is the Lord

Even so, Chapters 4 and 5, with their descriptions of the throne in heaven, and then the scroll and the Lamb, is where the exhilaration really starts for me. What a picture of the worship of which God is worthy:

In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

"You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being."

But after Chapter 5 things seem to get difficult. When I got bogged down in my reading this time I began to find the symbolic and fantastic imagery hard to digest. I wanted to decipher every little thing. I was reminded that I had long intended to find one good commentary on Revelation but had never bought one. I wanted a good *Reformed* commentary. I hoped that that would spare me the insipid "insights" of commentators who don't really believe that Scripture is God speaking. And it would also let me avoid the kind of minute, futuristic prophecy-deciphering that fundamentalist and some evangelical commentators like to apply to Revelation – interpretation that leaves me skeptical because it doesn't see the big picture, it doesn't interpret Scripture with Scripture and it misunderstands that this book, because of its apocalyptic nature, has to be read differently than, say, the Gospels or Epistles.

So when I got mired down looking for meaning I quit reading Revelation while I hunted around in earnest for a commentary. I found one: *The Returning King: A Guide to the Book of Revelation* by Vern S. Poythress (P&R Publishing, 2000). Judging by its introductory pages it will be immensely helpful in redirecting my reading of this book. But there's an irony here. Within the first couple of pages, Poythress (who has guided his seminary students through Revelation many times) notes that this biblical book is quite understandable by children. It's actually much clearer than we think. It is, after all, the *revelation* ("unveiling") of Jesus Christ, to John and to us.

A picture book

Revelation is a picture book, not a puzzle book, says Poythress. But "some teachers ... turn the book on its head; they turn it into a puzzle book. They preach obscurity instead of clarity, and of course people end up feeling incompetent." That was me. But I couldn't blame any teacher or pastor for it; I was doing it to myself. I was letting myself get mired in intellectual puzzles about meaning instead of allowing my heart to engage with the inspired pictures Christ reveals.

The big picture of Revelation shows God at the center of all things. No surprise there! And though we already know the outcome of the spiritual battle that has been waging ever since Satan and his minions were hurled from heaven before our world began, Revelation indelibly pictures for us Christ's vanquishing of Satan. Vern Poythress recounts: "A group of seminary students finished playing basketball in a gym. They noticed the janitor in a corner, reading a book. 'What are you reading?' 'The Bible.' 'What part of the Bible?' 'Revelation.' The seminarians thought they'd help the poor soul. 'Do you understand what you are reading?' 'Yes!' They were astonished. 'What does it mean?' 'Jesus is gonna win!'"

That theme of spiritual warfare is a big one in Revelation. And it forces us to keep in mind that "if we are not for God, we're against him." And that brings me to Harry Potter. Yes, Harry Potter!

I inadvertently read the first Potter book 10 years ago, then willingly read the subsequent ones and just finished the last one, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. I obviously advocate, along with the Apostle Paul, that Christians should continually "test the spirits." But I think that Christians who don't, for spiritual reasons, want to read J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books, or don't want their children to read them, are missing the crucial point of her story (story, singular: the seven Potter books are really one long, elaborate story, not seven disparate stories); not to mention, such Christians are missing the stimulating imaginative experience that an intricate, well-told story always affords.

It is true that Rowling herself does not admit to being a Christian and does not in her books overtly present the Christian gospel or even allude to God. Yet Harry Potter and his world could not exist except within the Christian view of the world that understands that *the* big thing going on in the universe is the great spiritual battle between good and evil. And Good will triumph.

Love destroys the Dark Lord

Potter's world is not the world of modern materialism which says we're born, we pursue pleasure and "goodness" where we can find it, we die, and we're done. End of story. In Potter's world the spiritual and material co-mingle as they do in God's world. Rowling portrays human beings with souls which death cannot extinguish. The key to life in Potter's world, and to destroying the satanic Dark Lord, is Love – from which springs the "spiritual" qualities of courage, honesty, generosity, kindness, endurance and especially self-sacrifice. Seventeen-year-old Harry Potter, in fact, goes to his death to save his whole world and destroy the Dark Lord, Voldemort.

He was early on set apart for that mission. In a Last Battle he completes his purpose; and because he was willing to die to save his world from the Dark Lord, he may return to that world, which has been transformed because Voldemort's evil has been vanquished. It's an unmistakable allusion to Christ's death and resurrection.

There are numerous other elements in Rowling's books that allude to an understanding of the universe as Christianity knows it to be, too many to name here. A major one will suffice: the spells and charms used by the (good) wizards and witches are equivalent to miracles. Curses they reserve for Voldemort and his minions. Voldemort and those he controls have no such scruples. The Dark Lord uses any foul means to dominate and destroy those who oppose them, but he also seduces by appealing to vanity. Voldemort twists everything that is good and pure, as Satan does.

Turn Potter fans on to Revelation

I am not implying, therefore, that the Harry Potter story is a Christian one. I mean to say that it alludes to the Christian story and biblical view of the world, and fundamentally recognizes that we are spiritual as well as bodily-endowed beings, and that it is the spiritual that gives meaning to life. I think that that acknowledgment by Rowling may be at the heart of the near universal appeal of the Harry Potter story. The fantastical world Rowling created, while at first glance apparently utterly unlike our own, is tacitly grounded in the way things really are, in the reality of body-soul-spirit, and in the spiritual warfare that has characterized human history since the Fall. Unwittingly, readers respond, and deeply, to that reality and to that spiritual battle. Modern people are tired of being told, implicitly and explicitly, that they are mere collections of molecules, that the only world that exists is what we can see, and that scientific knowledge affords the only legitimate and true understanding of the world.

Back to the book of Revelation. The world presented us there is also fantastical, far more fantastic than anything Rowling imagined. But this is *true* fantasy in a way Rowling's could never be. We meet God here, and he reveals the end of history, the real Last Battle, so that we will praise his majesty and so that we will not lose heart when the battle rages and we seem to be losing. This fantasy is the Word of Jesus Christ coming to us in pictures. That makes it peculiarly appealing in our visual age, particularly to the young. Perhaps it's time that we all reread the book of Revelation and offer it as recommended reading to Harry Potter fans who ache for real purpose in life, and who find they that long to follow the real Master and are willing to fight the real spiritual battle on his behalf.

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier *from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY. She may be contacted by email at: mvantil@adelphia.net or via her website: www.wordpowerpublishing.com*

Flooded with refugees, a Chadian farmer shares land

Scott Baldauf

Iriba, Chad – When Darfuri refugees started streaming across the border into Chad four years ago, fleeing a civil war that has killed 200,000 and displaced 2.5 million, many Chadians opened their arms in welcome.

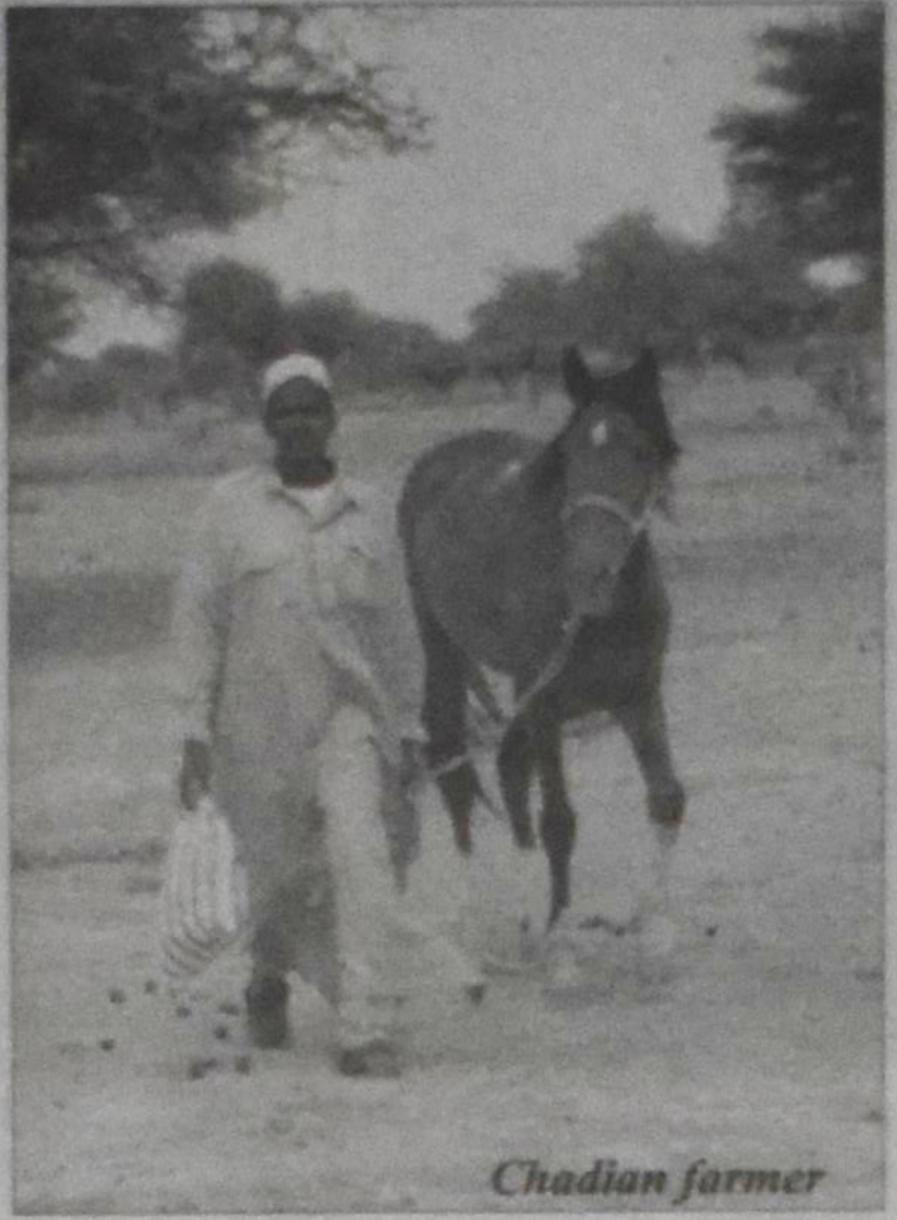
Al-Hajj Saboor Arta Bakit took one step further. He gave the refugees some of his land to raise their own crops. This step has earned him some local respect, some derision, and three separate stints in the local jail. But Mr. Bakit says he was only acting on the urging of his heart.

"When the refugees arrived here, they didn't have clothes, didn't have shoes, they were hungry, and when I saw them, I cried," says Bakit, brushing away dry animal dung from a shady spot under an acacia tree before sitting down. "I don't have money to give, but I do have lots of land. I don't want money for it, I don't want thanks from government. I just want thanks from God."

Not only does Bakit's gift provide 160 Sudanese families with the chance to become self-sufficient by growing their own food, it also builds a crucial bridge between Chadians and Sudanese refugees whose welcome may be wearing thin. Despite sharing the same languages, the same religion, and in some cases the same relatives, the addition of some 57,000 refugees to the local population of 60,000 has doubled the burden on water and land resources.

With the Darfur crisis going into its fifth year with no signs of resolution, Emmanuel Uwurukundo, head of operations for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in this eastern Chadian border town says that Bakit's actions could be a kind of model for a longer-term solution to ease tensions between local people and refugees.

"The donor nations will never continue to fund these programs indefinitely, so making the refugees more self-reliant means that refugees should have a kind of dignity. Refugees are not beggars," says Mr. Uwurukundo. "It's important that we find ways to put together the local population with refugees to work together and share resources."



Chadian farmer

Bridges between locals and refugees

Aid officials like Uwurukundo admit that few farmers will emulate Bakit in giving away their land. But they hope that Bakit and Sudanese refugees will be able to encourage local farmers to find other ways to integrate Sudanese farmers into the local economy, with the Sudanese refugees sharing their skills, and Chadians sharing some of their land.

When international aid is measured in billions, the generosity of a few acres of land by a small farmer like Bakit may seem like small change. But in a harsh arid region, where plots of arable land are precious and often separated by dozens of miles of rocky desert, Bakit's gift is breathtaking and powerful.

Aid workers say they are concerned that foreign assistance for the displaced Darfuris could cause resentment among the native Chadians, an advantage that is sometimes perceived as favoritism. Bakit says Chadians would only gain if Darfur farmers succeed.

Farming in both Darfur and Eastern Chad is a very low-tech business. In both places, it's a matter of waiting for the rains to come in early July before shoving seeds into the wet desert floor, one at a time, with a thumb.

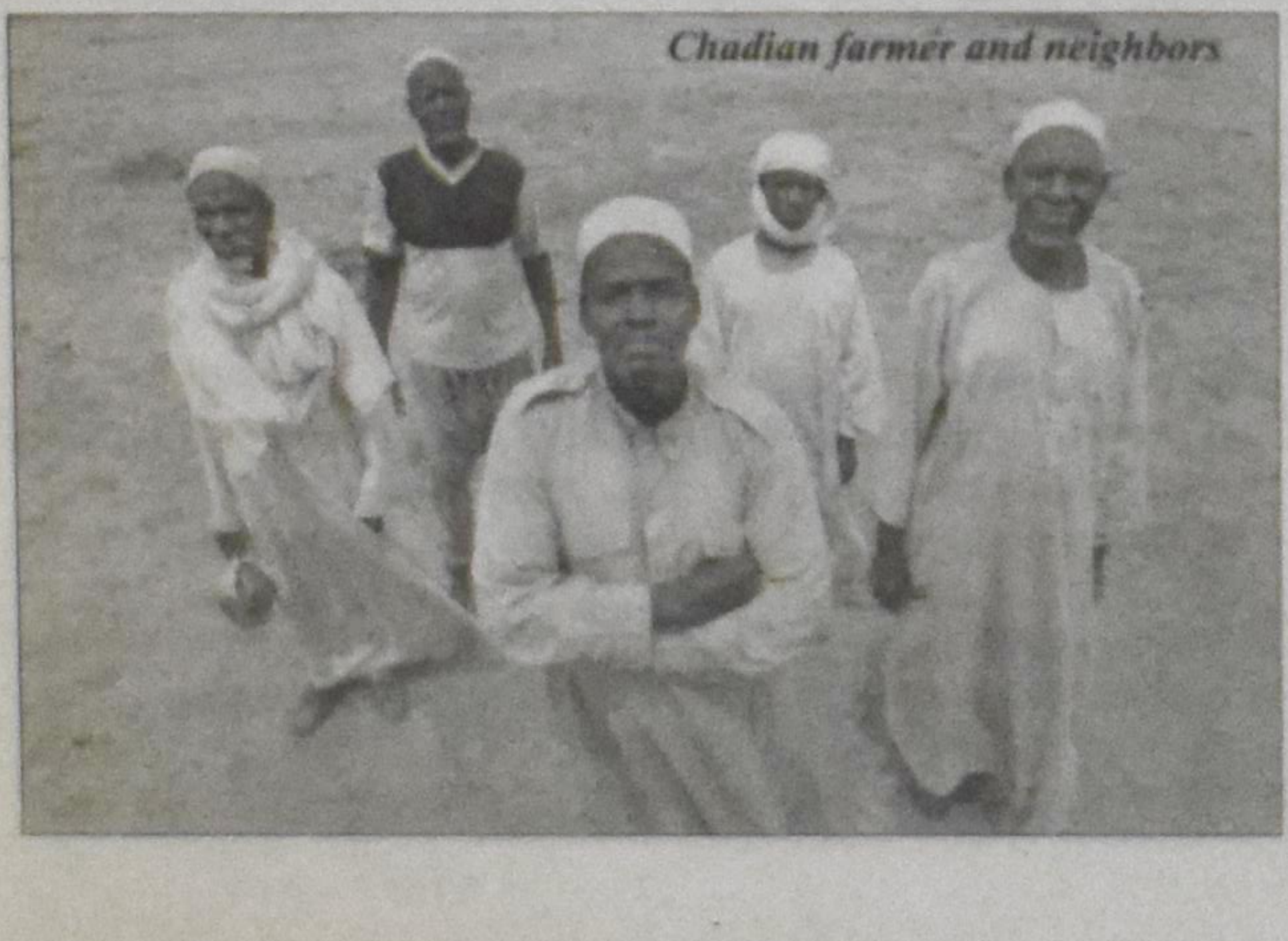
But the farmers of Darfur have slightly more water, slightly longer growing seasons, and have accumulated more techniques for farming, such as the use of animals for pulling plows, carrying water from nearby streams, and so on. Because of their added experience, Bakit believes that Darfuris have a lot of knowledge they can share with their relatively less developed brethren in Chad.

"When I go to the mosque, I tell people to give land to the refugees; they have experience in growing crops that we don't have," says Bakit. "In the mosque, most keep silent, some say yes, but I'm sure, if you dig for water here, and these refugees start to grow crops in the dry season, people will start to give their land to the refugees too. They are waiting to see what happens first."

The terms of Bakit's gift – he told the farmers they could use the land as long as they need it – come with major risks. Sudanese refugees from Darfur belong to the same Zaghawa tribe that live in and around Iriba, and they could easily blend with the local population, staying on Bakit's land forever. It is for this reason, and also because of tree-chopping by refugee farmers on Bakit's farmland, that Bakit's neighbors have become disgruntled. Chadian forestry authorities in Iriba arrested Bakit three times, fining him the princely sum of $240 on charges of deforestation.

"Other people don't like what I'm doing, but that doesn't concern me," says Bakit. "It's my land. Let them take me to the police station. I fear only God."

For Sudanese refugees, the offer of land from a Chadian farmer like Bakit is a rare glimpse of hope after four years of near-despair. Many Darfuris see the Darfur Peace Agreement hammered out in Abuja in June 2006 as a disappointment, since only one of the three main rebel groups – the Sudanese Liberation Movement of Minni Minawi – signed the cease-fire with the Sudanese government in Khartoum.



Chadian farmer and neighbors

Bakit's personal empathy

"Al-Hajj is an unusual man, but he's a human being, and his context is very different from other Chadians," says Uwurukundo, referring to Bakit.

The Chadian farmer is generous to Sudanese refugees, the UNHCR chief says, because Bakit himself once had to flee his native Chad to Sudan at a time when there was fighting in Chad and peace in neighboring Darfur. When peace came to Chad, Bakit returned, and as a witness to thousands of Darfuri refugees coming to his town, "he sees himself in that context," says Uwurukundo, and wants to give back at least some part of the generosity that he received from Darfuris.

Fighting between the Sudanese government and Darfur rebels has slackened, but the remaining anti-government rebel factions have now become so fractured, with 18 splinter groups fighting each other and attacking humanitarian aid groups, that Darfur is as dangerous today as it was when the war began four years ago.

This means that refugees like Haroom Omar, an elderly Sudanese from the Darfur town of Kornoi, must make their future here in Chad, at least for the time being.

"One day, [Bakit] came into our camp and told us, 'I have land, you are poor, you can use this land until you go, or if you stay here, you can keep farming it,'" recalls Mr. Omar, who supports his three wives and 16 children by farming peanuts, okra, sorghum, tomatoes, and watermelon during the three month rainy season that starts in mid-July. "This man is totally different from the other Chadians. Because of us, the government has put him in jail three times."

Baharaddin Ali, a Sudanese refugee from the Darfur town of Kornoi, is another of the 160 farming families to take up Bakit's offer.

Like Mr. Omar, he grows crops during the rainy season, selling what his family of two wives and nine children don't eat. He is grateful for the use of the land, but there is no question that he would rather be back home in Sudan, if there was a cessation of fighting and banditry there. "If the rains are good here, the farming is also good. But the water supply is much better in Darfur. This is a hard place to farm."

"This man's idea is different from the other people," says Haroon Ibra Diar, vice president of the refugee committee at the refugee camp of Touloum, where most of Bakit's farming refugees have come from. "If we had help from international organizations, to bring water pumps, we could farm more land during the dry season."

He looks around him at the barren dust that the refugees will start farming when the rains come in mid-July. "All this land that you see right now would be green with crops."

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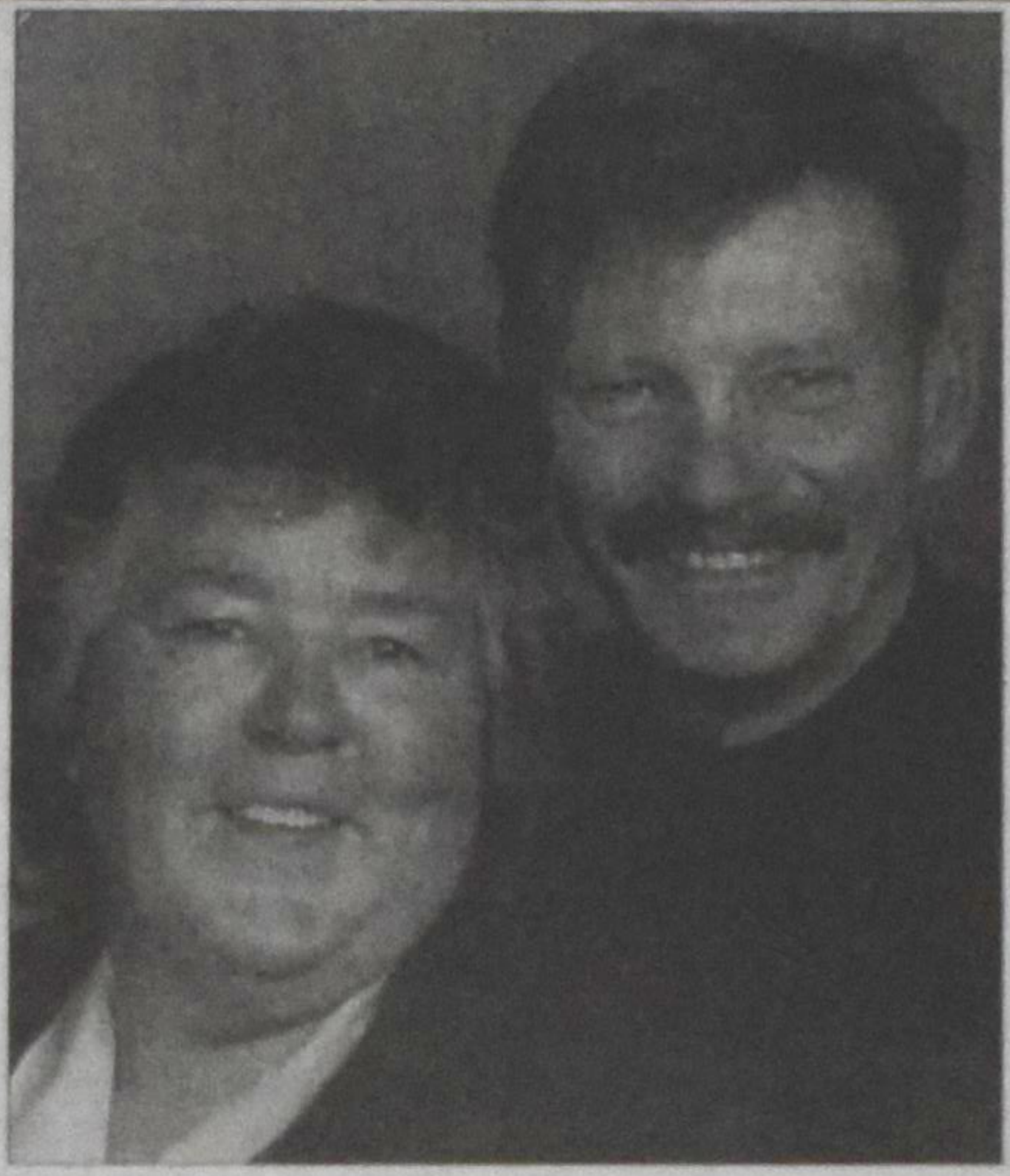
We are sorry for the omissions in this anniversary last time.



For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
the Lord bestows favour and honour;
No good thing does he withhold
from those whose walk is blameless. Psalm 84:11

We give thanks to God for being a sun and shield for our parents

Ralph and Joanne Vording (nee **Helder**)

who will celebrate their **40th Wedding Anniversary**
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With love from:
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Thank you

"*...Wait for the Lord*

Be strong, and let your heart take courage;
yes, wait for the Lord!" (Ps 27:1,13,14) (Ps 27:14)

This was the text the Lord gave me while anticipating the major surgery (valve and aorta replacement) because of an aneurysm. I could do nothing but wait, pray, depend on God, the doctor and the prayers of his people.

Today I say thank you, thank you, Lord!

Not only did he bring me through the months of healing and recuperation, but also Gerald, who had a hip replacement. We are both walking and are thankful and privileged to celebrate our 50 years of married life.

Oh yes, the waves were pretty huge and rough at times, but we've also experienced much joy and goodness. God's rich promises, love and nearness were always proved true.

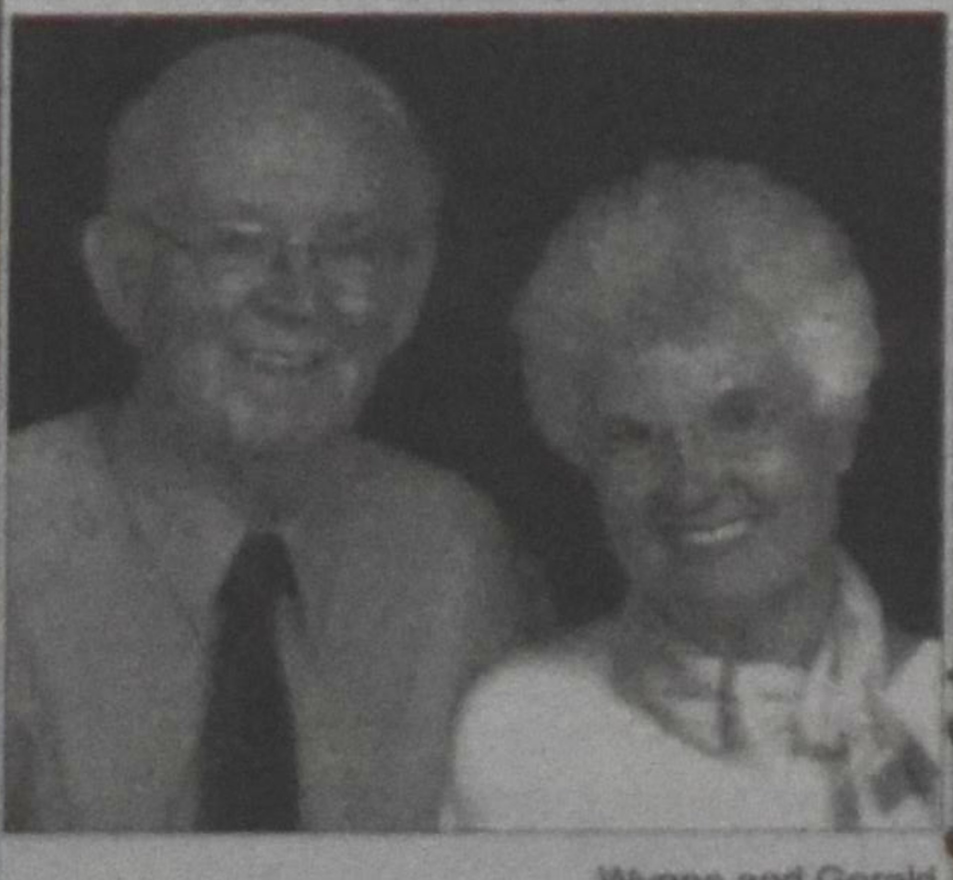
We're grateful for our supporting family, friends, church community, neighbours and the different groups we serve, enjoy and are enriched with.

We especially thank ALL of you for the loving, care, prayers, cards, meals, visits and other support and encouragement we experienced during our time of operations, healing and recuperation. We felt "lifted up" and "carried through". Thank you again for expressing God's mercy, grace and love.

We are truly blessed, as is evident in the tribute written by our children in the July 30th issue of the *Christian Courier*.

God's grace, mercy and love to each one of you! Shalom!

We serve a Risen Saviour (PH 405)
He is Lord! (PH 633)



Wynne and Gerald

Obituaries

Dec. 20, 1931 - July 4, 2007

God took to himself his child,

Peter Sikma

after a courageous battle with cancer, peacefully at home in his 76th year.

A precious husband to Jane Sikma for 48 years
dear father to 7 children,
beloved Pake to 24 grandchildren.

Father of:
George & Donna Sikma, *Orono, ON*
Julia & Rick Koopmans, *Prince George, BC*
Yolanda & Mitch VandenBerg, *Lindsay, ON*
Tim & Joanne Sikma, *Sylvan Lake, AB*
Grace & Jim Pot, *Waterdown, ON*
Howard & Arlene Sikma, *Newcastle, ON*
Joyce & Andy Van bruinessen

Brother to: (Nel†) Peter & Rose Feddema
(Pier†) Rose & Ed Rusticus
Sonya & Klaas Reitsma
(Tom†) Liz Sikma
Edna & Sjerp Vandermeer
John & Margaret Sikma
Betty & William Flikkema

Brother-in-law to:
Bil & Wilma Van Huizen
and other family in Holland.

His life was marked by his strong Christian faith, devotion to his church, unending support of Christian education, joy in farming and his love and concern for family.

A celebration service was held at Maranatha CRC in Bowmanville on July 9.

Condolences can be sent to Jane Sikma
25 Winter Rd, Orono ON L0B 1M0

March 25,1933 July 10, 2007

Called to his eternal home with the Lord

John Peter Feddema

beloved husband of Rennie (nee Klinker)

Much loved father and grandfather of
Janette Speelman, *Toronto, ON*
Amanda and Robby
Frieda & Ed Salomons, *Leduc, AB*
Keith and Robin
Ronda and Barry
Brent
Alice & Mel Janssens, *Putnam, ON*
Jason, Allison, Brittany, Wesley
Jack Feddema & Kelly Earl, *London, ON*
Heather, Duncan
Irene Feddema, *Hamilton, ON*

Dear great-grandfather of:
Paige, Adriene, Stefani, Darcie, Lily, Christian

Sadly missed by brothers and sisters
Jake & Linda, Jane & Frank vander Heide,
Greta Huizinga, Ann & Bob Wieringa,
Walt & Effie

In-laws: Harry & Riek, Don & Linda,
Effie & Menno Eelkema, Jack

Nieces and nephews

Funeral service was held on July 13, 07 at the Westmount CRC in Strathroy, Ont.

Lamentations 3:22,23

Correspondence address:
5864 Inadale Dr RR 2
Strathroy ON N7G 3H4

Personal

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Market Place 10 AM - 6 PM
Auction, Raffle Draw 6 PM -10 PM
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Christian Courier is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Wednesday, 12 days prior to publication date.
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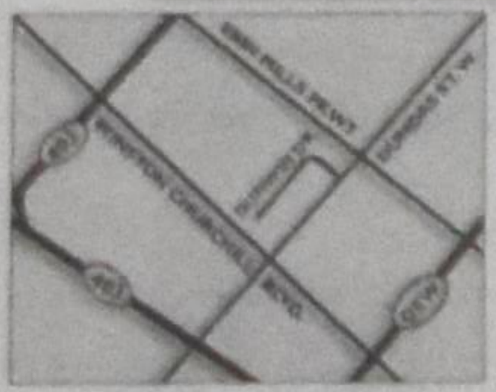

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sep 2 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Jacob Kuntz will be preaching.

Sep 29 Netherlands Bazaar, **Thornhill** Community Centre. See ad for details.

Sep 28 Retirement Celebration for Co Vanderlaan (CLAC) in **Edmonton**. For more information see ad.

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News

Simple sun-cooker takes off as a way to help Darfuris

Daniel B. Wood

Encino, Calif. – When Harvard law student Jesse Gabriel organized a "Dinner for Darfur" fundraiser in April, he was amazed that 17 student groups got together and raised $16,000 in one night.

When nurse Harriet Lavin showed footage of Darfur at a song-and-prayer evening in Kenosha, Wis., she was struck by the "instant generosity" of 70 rural residents who opened their pocketbooks to the tune of $2,500 for a cause they hadn't known anything about.

And when Los Angeles 11th-grader Shelby Layne raised $15,000 from three jewelry sales to help Darfur refugees, it "was successful beyond my wildest dreams," she says.

The three activists are among thousands who have raised money for a project that addresses the rape, mutilation, and murder of Darfuri women – now among at least 2 million Sudanese displaced by the conflict. The aim: Supply families with solar cookers and teach women in refugee camps new cooking skills so they don't have to burn wood.

This reduces the need for women to hunt for firewood outside the camps, where the risk of attack and rape is greater.

A recent report by the humanitarian group Refugees International identified rape as a weapon of systematic ethnic cleansing being used by Sudanese government-backed janjaweed militiamen. "The raping of Darfuri women is not sporadic or random, but is inexorably linked to the systematic destruction of their communities," the report says.

More cookers being distributed

Some 200,000 women and children live in refugee camps across the border from Sudan. More than 6,000 cookers have been distributed in the Iridimi refugee camp, a camp that has almost no vegetation but sunshine 330 days a year. Another 10,000 are expected to be supplied in the Touloum camp nearby over the next year.

"The fact that the use of these cookers has grown so fast in Iridimi is a testament to the need for safety," says Rachel Andres, director of the solar cooker project for Jewish World Watch (JWW), a nonprofit coalition of synagogues in southern California, which is a co-sponsor of the project.

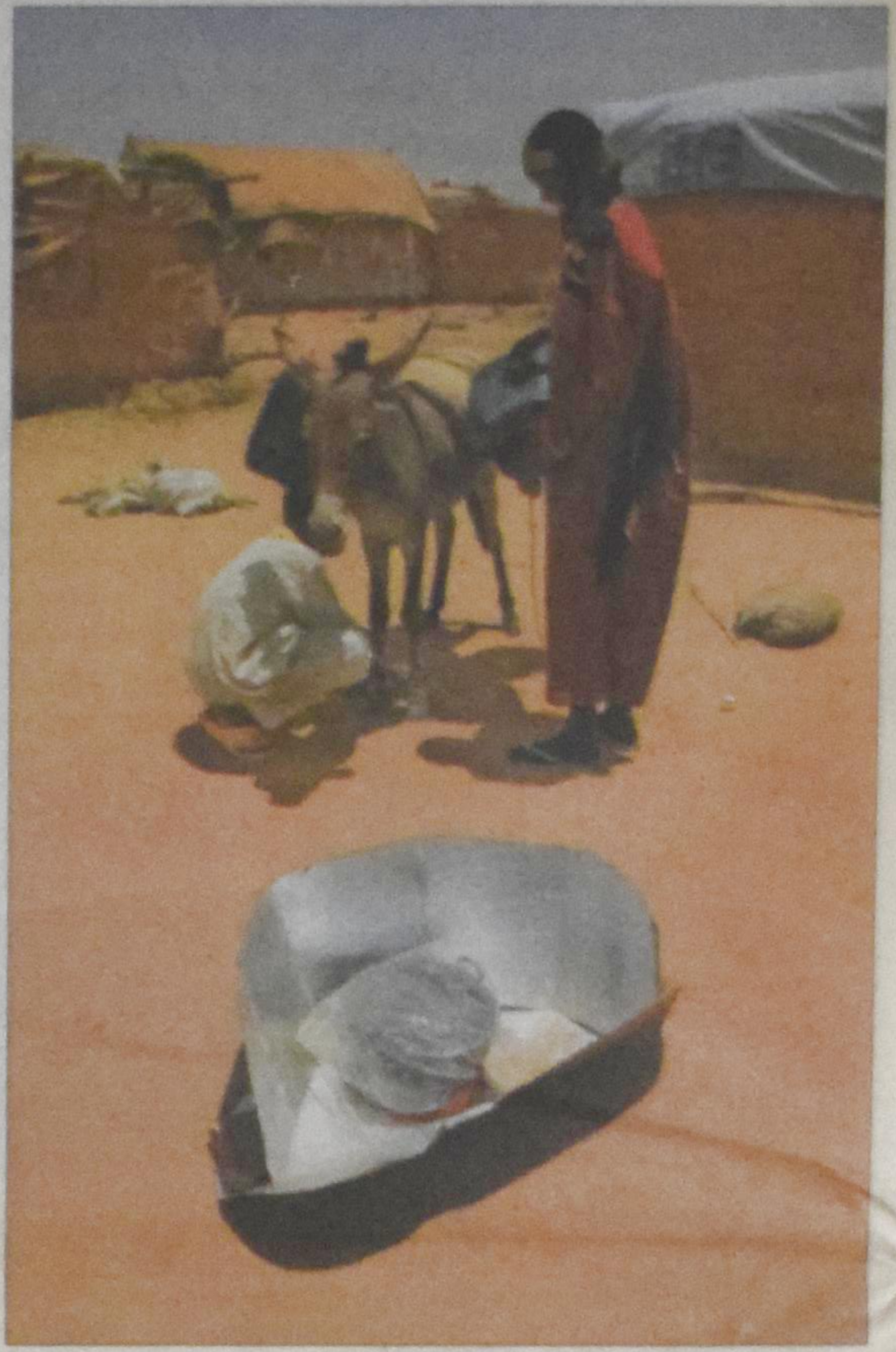
Two solar cookers can save a ton of wood per year, according to JWW. They free women from tending fires to do other tasks, and provide income for female refugees because the cookers are manufactured on-site. Envision foil-covered cardboard (about four feet by two feet) folded upward to direct sun's rays on a black pot, placed in the center, and covered in a plastic bag. Millet, rice, eggs, and other ingredients are put in the pot, surrounded by the water-moistened plastic bag that provides softening condensation.

Why project is unique

The solar cooker project is unique in the annals of global aid efforts, say international aid experts and individual fundraisers.

For one thing, the United States and humanitarian groups have declared the conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan a genocide. More than 350,000 people have died. Second, the Sudanese government puts restrictions on humanitarian aid workers, making grass-roots groups and private donations, especially to those in refugee camps, more important.

"The Sudanese government is allowing the conditions in the camps to be one of their main mechanisms of genocide," says Adam Sterling, executive director of the Sudan Divestment Task Force. "It is the type of grass-roots efforts like the solar cooker project supported by private donations that is sustaining [the refugees]."



The idea originated with Rabbi Harold Schulweis and activist/attorney Janice Kamenir-Reznick, who formed Jewish World Watch in 2004.

Since then, the organization has reached out to major churches and universities across the US, and says it seeks to "combat genocide" through community education and activism. So far, $750,000 has been raised in individual contributions of $30 – the cost of two solar cookers, training, and two pot holders, which support one family.

"In my 50 years as a rabbi, I have never seen an idea or project or program ignite so broadly or contagiously," says Mr. Schulweis. "This has been a moving experience for Jews by uniting different congregations who usually have their own separate projects ... as well as for reaching out to other religions. It is an issue that has proven to transcend denominationalism."

After the JWW identified Darfur as a genocide, it began to support a small pilot project there led by KoZon, a Dutch organization that provides women in developing countries with inexpensive cooking techniques using the sun.

"The women were apprehensive at first, and couldn't believe you could really cook with the sun," says Ms. Andres. When JWW began to help the project, KoZon was testing the cookers with about 350 families. (A typical family consists of one woman as head of the household, two or three of her own children and one or two orphans, she says. Only one in five households has an adult male.)

"They tried the food, realized it tasted good, and that you didn't have to stand over a fire for hours," Andres says. The staples of such camps are millet, rice, and bean rations that are trucked in from long distances – and have to be cooked.

Fundraising efforts take off

Once the solar cooker project proved to be feasible, fundraising efforts spread to purchase the cookers, build manufacturing facilities on-site in neighboring Chad, and teach women to assemble them.

Shelby, the 11th-grader, heard about the solar cooker project from her father, and sold jewelry she made by hand or collected from friends and relatives. "The response by people is an immediate and solemn recognition about the horrors of racial strife and ethnic cleansing going on right now, in their own world," she says.

Shelby was motivated to raise money because she thought she could have an impact – even with a small donation. She now gives talks to school, civic, and church groups on the Darfur crisis.

"I thought if I just raised $100 and purchased three solar cookers, then that would really make a big difference for somebody," Shelby says. "People love the idea that no matter what age they are, how much money they have, that their small contribution will honestly make a difference to someone."

See: www.jewishworldwatch.org

Daniel B. Wood is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

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